







# EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN

A Satirical Novel.

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BY

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A MONTH IN TOWN—“THE GENERAL POST BAG,”  
REJECTED ODES, &c. &c.”

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FIFTEEN

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## CHAP. XIX.

*Some old characters which had nearly been forgotten brought forward again — A delicate string touched—Discord produced—The flame fanned by another circumstance not expected by the parties, but not perhaps out of the reader's calculation — Visitors—A dissertation on pictures, taste and the like, and an interruption in time to save the credit of a duke.*

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THE Duchess of Whelps was in such perfect good' humour, in consequence of the successful issue of her visit to Narcissus to obtain an addition of authority to enable her to controul Lady

Charlotte, that she surprized and delighted all her household, and even her grand-daughter herself, who was far from suspecting that the cause of this superficial goodness originated in a circumstance so directly aimed at her own comfort and independence.

For the first two or three days all was smooth and fair, and Lady Charlotte flattered herself into a belief that, before his departure on his country excursion, her father had softened down the natural asperity of the old lady's temper, and induced her to promise an alteration in that mode of treatment, the inefficacy of which she had herself by her conduct so decidedly endeavoured to impress upon his mind.

One morning, however, whether the fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh, it signi-

fieth little to the interest of these pages to determine; Lady Charlotte returned from her usual walk in the woods, with a countenance full of seriousness, tending to melancholy. Her whole visage appeared to have been discomposed by some circumstance of an extraordinary nature, and the duchess, after surveying her for some minutes with the most fixed attention, in something approaching to a tone of impatient petulance, demanded what adventure she had met with to disconcert her?

“Are you sure, my dear grandmama, that poor grandpa has not made his escape into the forest?” asked Lady Charlotte, in a tremulous voice.

“Escape into the forest!” echoed the duchess—“Why, is the girl bereft of her senses? What in heaven’s name has



“happened to induce you to ask such an indelicate question?” And the looks of the duchess, as she uttered the words, plainly evinced the agitation and apprehension she felt.

“Don’t be angry, grandma, and I’ll tell you all about it,” returned Lady Charlotte. “I was walking in the forest—in the thick and darkest part of the forest—when I met a man, so like—so very like—my grandpa; just his look of composure—his size—his stoop—his hat—his wig—his stick—his shoes and stockings—his coat and waistcoat—all, just exactly like himself; and I stopped, grandma—nay, you must look good-tempered—and then he stopped—and I was frightened a bit, for I did not know what he might do to me, and I made a movement to run away—and then he shook his head so piteously, and clasped

his hands together—and cast his eyes up towards heaven---and, in a moment disappeared in the wood ; and, for the life of me, I could not tell which way he went nor how he vanished ; Now are you sure, grandmama, that grandpa is safe in his own room ?”

Lady Charlotte had completely overthrown all the duchess's evenness of temper ; for the latter could not bear to have her conjugal vigilance and affection called in question, nor to be reminded of the necessity of preserving her good humour. She did not answer, however, for some time, until by a little internal reasoning she had satisfied herself of the impossibility of the escape of her consort, and, as soon as she had settled this point, she immediately mounted the stool of dignity, and in a voice, neither very remarkable for its

eloquence, softness, nor perspicuity, replied to her granddaughter :

“ Child, you are grown too saucy, much too saucy to be endured” (and she applied to her snuff-box, which at once convinced Lady Charlotte that she had committed a most heinous offence) “ I am in perfect good humour, never was in a better, since I knew what reason was. But it is not to be borne, that I, who am a pattern of what a wife ought to be, should be suspected of a want of care and attention to my husband. Hussey, I say, your tongue runs before your wit, and you must be taught the necessity of curbing it a little.” And then the snuff-box was assailed with redoubled fury.

“ Grandmama,” cried Lady Charlotte, whose indignation was fast rising,

“Who said you was in an ill-humour? Let me think what I would, I did not venture to say as much. I see now how it is, that you have been so kind the last day or two; it is only because nothing has happened to put you the least out of the way; but the moment you have met with the slightest opposition, like a bomb, I believe it is, off you go in a moment with a terrible explosion.”

“And off you shall go, Miss Impudence, I assure you,” retorted the duchess, with a stern and fiery look---  
“for now let me inform you, that I have power from your father to use personal *correction*, as well as personal *restraint*, if I think it expedient, and I shall no longer delay acting upon the authority he has given to me; therefore, prepare yourself, Miss, for a little less liberty

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“than you have been accustomed to enjoy, for I mean to begin with confinement.”

“And end with flogging, I suppose:” returned Lady Charlotte, biting her thumbs, and casting a stern glance as she could controul, at her angry grandmother.

“That must depend on your own behaviour,” answered the duchess—  
“every thing is left to my discretion, and, if I think it prudent to resort to the rod—”

“Who will you get to inflict it?” asked Lady Charlotte. “Who will have the hardihood and the audacity to lift a hand against my person?”

“I will, Miss Assurance,” said the

duchess. "I will correct you, when correction is necessary. This audacious spirit of your's must be quelled, and it shall too, in spite of these pretended airs of independence. Remember you are not arrived at years of discretion you must be matured by wholesome severity."

Lady Charlotte looked first at her grandmother, then at the floor, then tried to assume an appearance of calmness and unconcern, but the result had too deeply fixed itself to be eradicated---it was rankling in her bosom ---and stimulating all the feelings of rage and indignation. She bit her thumb, and then walked across the room to the window, and began to play upon the glass with her fingers, without deigning to utter one single sentence in reply to the menace of the duchess.

At this instant a servant entered the apartment, and putting a letter into the hand of the Duchess, immediately withdrew, leaving his mistress, gazing, with some astonishment, on the hand-writing. A moment, however, had scarcely elapsed, before her highness hastily tore open the letter, and, hurrying her eye over the contents, threw it indignantly on the carpet, and, rising from her seat, exclaimed—"Never was woman so cursed as myself; cursed in all my undertakings, my wishes, and my prospects. But I'll never endure it, I never will, I am determined. Ernest and his bussey shall find that I am not to be trifled with."

As the duchess uttered these words, she rushed angrily out of the apartment, and no sooner had she disappeared, than Lady Charlotte, turning round, disco-

vered the obnoxious scrawl lying still upon the carpet, and advancing to pick it up, murmured to himself; "I wonder what has happened to put my amiable sweet-tempered grandmama in this new *tantrum*;" and then casting her eyes hastily over the contents of the epistle, her ladyship read the following billet.

"With great humility, your affectionate son Ernest, and his most dutiful spouse, beg permission to inform your highness of their arrival in the Fever-isle, and their abode in the mansion of Narcissus, *pro tempore*. They crave pardon for thus violating the agreement which had been previously entered into, but beg your highness to attribute the breach to the impossibility of living at a distance from their excellent mother, without having approached her for the purpose of receiving her maternal bene-



diction. It is solely with this view that they left Tzell, that the duchess consented to expose herself to the perils of the deep, and the fatigues of a tedious journey ; that they may hereafter enjoy the pleasing satisfaction of sitting down comfortably, in their domestic capacity, assured of that reciprocal good understanding with their kindred, which, in their opinion is essential to happiness. They humbly, therefore, beg to announce to your highness, their intention immediately to follow the bearer of this letter, in order that not a moment may be lost in the completion of arrangements of such great magnitude and importance to the happiness of all the parties concerned."

"Mercy on me!" cried Lady Charlotte, as soon as she had finished reading the letter, and had replaced it in the si-

tuation whence she had taken it—"Mercy on me; then I suppose, since grandmama has taken herself off in such a *quandary*, that I must receive this uncle, and this new aunt of mine. Well, they have done nothing to offend me; they married it is true, without my consent, because, I suppose, they considered me too insignificant to trouble themselves about it; but what of that? I am determined, if I tell them of it at all, to do it in a very mild, good-humoured sort of way, nothing like anger, nor vexation, nor disappointment in it, for I am sure it was their own business more than that of any body else. But I don't know how it is, in this family: here, they wanted to marry me to a person without troubling themselves about my inclination in the business; and because I thought proper to tell them I should be consulted, and give a casting voice in the matter, I

• have suffered God knows what ! And now my uncle Ernest has committed a terrible crime by marrying somebody whom I suppose he had a liking for, without asking leave. But to be sure, they do say that Madam jilted another of my uncles ; and, if he did so, I won't take her part any further, for I can't say I like jilting ; but, however, the best way, is to be in a good humour with that which cannot be undone."

Her ladyship might have gone on with this kind of soliloquy *ad infinitum*, but just as she had reached this point in her discussion with herself, a servant entered the room, announcing the duke and duchess, themselves, and within the lapse of a minute, their highnesses themselves followed the servant ; and Ernest, handing his duchess to Lady Charlotte, presented them to each other,

and recommended a mutual embrace of affection.

“As far as I am concerned, your highness,” said Lady Charlotte, in a kind tone, and kissing the cheek of her newly made relation—“I bid you most cordially welcome to the Fever-isle, and assure you, I shall feel most delighted in the anticipation of a closer acquaintance with such a charming aunt.”

“I hail your ladyship’s kind welcome,” said the duchess, returning the salute of her niece, “as a happy omen, and the precursor of a reconciliation in another quarter; for it must be the first wish of my heart, dearest Lady Charlotte, to stand well in the opinion of all the friends of my beloved Ernest.”

While this was passing between the

two ladies, the letter on the floor had caught the eye of Ernest, and curiosity prompted him to take it up, and cast a glance at its contents: it had been torn nearly across by the duchess, in the heat and anger of her feelings, when she opened it; and no sooner did the astonished Ernest perceive his own handwriting, than the certain fate of his visit came as forcibly to his mind, as though he had heard it in the stern voice of his mother herself. For some moments, he stood mute with disappointment, but at length, roused by the voice of his duchess, who inquired what had occurred to afflict him thus suddenly and powerfully, he summoned all his fortitude to his aid, and taking her by the hand, exclaimed—

“Let us return, my dear duchess; let us return home, for the present. I think

it will be more advisable to come at another time, as I perceive my mother is not at home, or not at leisure." And, saying this, he offered to lead her towards the door, but the duchess resisted and replied—

"You have never asked the question, Ernest; therefore, how can you tell whether she is at home or not?" Lady Charlotte can tell us, I'll be bound."

Lady Charlotte was much perplexed by the question. She had seen the movement of Ernest, and the effect which the letter had produced upon him; and, of course, she was at no loss to interpret the cause of the emotion, and of the wish to depart which he had subsequently expressed. She was of a feeling disposition, and could not bear to inflict pain; and besides, she fostered a faint hope,

that an interview between her grandmother, and her uncle and aunt, might do away with all differences of opinion, and be the commencement of a permanent union, productive of happiness both to them, and to herself; she, therefore, resolved not to let fall a syllable which could be taken in the light of discouragement, but rather to keep hope alive, and, after pondering a short time, over her answer, she replied—"My grandmama is at home, and if your highnesses will permit me, I will run and try if I can find out where she is."

Duke Ernest could not refuse this offer without discovering to his wife the secret of the letter which he had taken up from the floor; and, as he had committed himself, before he had sailed from the manor they had recently left, to bring about a reconciliation, he was

anxious to conceal from her knowledge every circumstance which could have the slightest tendency to weaken her confidence in his promise, or in his power to fulfil it. He was conscious, at the same time, that if the duchess should be found, the result would be nothing short of the premature destruction of all those hopes he had cherished, and all those prospects which, in conjunction with his wife, he had so fondly sketched ; but there was no alternative but to submit, and he accordingly assented to Lady Charlotte's proposal.

“ Ernest !” said the duchess, as soon as Lady Charlotte had quitted the apartment. The duke turned towards his spouse, who, fixing her gaze steadily upon his countenance, resumed—“ Ernest !—What possessed you to wish to .



take me away without seeing your mother; after all the trouble in which I have acquiesced?"

The duke paused a moment—"What possessed me? Nothing, my sweet love, nothing; but I thought if she were busy, we might spoil all by disturbing her."

"And pray, Ernest, who is your mother, that she may not be disturbed?" asked the angry duchess, whose cheeks began to glow with a hue beyond nature. "Have I married you, to be treated by your family as if I were unworthy of notice? Who, Sir, is degraded by this match, if there is any degradation in it—you or me?"

"Oh you, my angel," returned the passive and obedient duke—"You to

“be sure. I consider myself as highly honoured, and the condescension entirely your own.”

“Could not I have married men who had manors at their command?”—replied the duchess—“Men, who possess courage, grace, youth, and something like personal attractions. You have none of these, not one of them; therefore, it was I who condescended, when I entered into the nuptial contract with you.”

“I know it all, my dearest love,” returned the duke—“I know the full extent of your condescension, and my mother knows it too, and she must and shall consent to forgive us both. But, *à propos*, my love, what think you of this suite of apartments? The tapes-

try is accounted absolutely a nonpareil in workmanship; the windows are noble; the scope of the rooms magnificent; and then the paintings—by the bye, what d'ye think of that Venus bathing?"

"Fie, Ernest, you should be modest," returned the duchess, putting her fan before her face, as if to conceal her confusion—"You are not to take freedoms of an unbecoming nature because we happen to be married. Such pictures are only intended to be looked at, not spoken of. I admire much that Christ. look at the dignity on the brow, the modest firmness of the glance, the majesty of the whole contour; to my taste that is a most exquisite piece."

"No one can dispute the elegant cor-

rectness of your taste for a moment, my angel," answered the duke—"but turn this way, nothing indelicate upon my honour, and that is a sacred oath. Look at the fishermen; see how finely every part is conceived and executed, and the dog, I call the dog a master-piece. Zounds, look at his countenance, his nose, his ears, feet, body, tail, and rump. Would you believe it, my love, that a great connoisseur of our island offered me a cool thousand pounds, if I would just cut the dog out of the picture, and let him have it; and the men would have fetched five hundred a-piece."

• "A thousand for the dog!" echoed the duchess, raising her eye-glass, and surveying the dog—"I don't discover its value. In what does its peculiar excellence consist?"

“Why, my darling,” returned the duke—“I’ll tell you. That beautiful dog, which, according to the opinions of the most able canine amateurs, is a mixture of the bloodhound and the common mastiff, is the exact *fac simile* of a very favourite animal belonging to the connoisseur himself; ears, nose, smellers, legs, tail, in fact, every thing precisely similar, even to the colour, and the white marks on the face, and the white heel behind, which made the picture worth any thing to him.”

“Ah, ah, ah!” was the reply of the duchess, who, as soon as she had recovered her gravity, exclaimed—“What a man of taste! Heavens! Why he ought to have been immortalized! But if he placed such a value on the dog, why not take the whole picture,

for, in my opinion, the other parts of it are by a great deal the best in point of execution?"

"Because, my love," returned Ernest—"there were none of his acquaintances whom the figures resembled. He did try hard to find out a likeness between the elder of the two fishermen and his old butler, and it did very well until he got as far as the nose, and here the similarity failed altogether; for the man in the picture has, what they call here, a Roman nose, whereas my friend's butler had unfortunately lost the principal part of his, having nothing but a knot remaining."

"And is this a fair specimen of the taste of all your countrymen, Ernest?" asked the duchess, sighing, as she

thought flashed across her mind, that, instead of being brought into a land of civilization, where the arts and sciences were cultivated, and genius was encouraged, she had been inveigled amongst a tribe of Hottentots, to whom the utmost excellencies of art were nothing; who, barbarous from education and habit, shewed no germs of refinement, and scoffed at and despised the luxuries of taste.

- And her fears were, by no means unnatural, for the sample of judgment which had just been given, exquisite and inimitable as it appeared in the estimation of Ernest, was but a sorry specimen in the better opinion of her highness: Yet, though correct in itself, it was not a correct sample of the scientific researches of the Fever-islanders. There

were, doubtless, many such connoisseurs in the island; many individuals who had peculiar notions and ideas of their own, as remote from truth, as the surface from the centre, but upon which they pertinaciously erected theories of their own, the most absurd and erroneous imaginable; but there was also a more than proportionate quantity of sterling ore in the island, of the sterling ore of genius, which, when taken from the mine of obscurity, would display a lustre which was not to be excelled. Of the truth of this assertion, however, the duchess had hitherto had no means of satisfying herself.

To the question of the duchess, Ernest was at a loss to return an answer; for, as it has been before asserted, he considered that he had given a most



excellent proof, that there was a great deal of genuine talent in the country, and if the reader should, from this circumstance, have the hardihood to wag a finger at the duke, and to call his sagacity in question, it only remains for the author of these pages to close the colloquy just where it is, lest he should be accused of a wish to lessen rank.

Duke Ernest was still pondering, and revolving in his own mind, what manner of reply he could give to this most puzzling, and, consequently, most extraordinary question, when he was fortunately relieved from his labyrinth of perplexity, by the re-appearance of Lady Charlotte, who came with a bound into the apartment, her eyes darting indignation, and her cheeks deeply tinged with a corresponding hue; but for the

cause of this emotion, and the circumstances which led to it, the reader must be contented to suspend his curiosity, until he may feel inclined to enter upon the labour of perusing the next chapter.

## CHAP. XX.

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*The Author traceth the steps of a great personage, and sheweth the influence of books even upon illustrious minds—The favourite attendant in disgrace—The stigma transposed to a bookseller, one of Heaven's best works—The failure of a good design—The disappointment of Duke Ernest and his spouse—A new scheme.*

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THE Duchess of Whelps, as soon as she had left the apartment, in which she had received the letter from her son, rushed into her bed-chamber, and threw herself on a settee, where she renewed her attack on the snuff-box, with such

vehemence, as to raise a complete vapour around herself. The application, however, did not afford her any considerable relief; still the image of her disobedient son, forcing his obnoxious spouse into her presence was constantly present to her imagination; and not all the clouds of snuff in which she enveloped herself, could raise a mist sufficient to dim the waking vision.

. From the bed-chamber, her highness then made the best of her way to the library, and snatching a book from the table, where one of her attendant ladies had been reading, sought, by pursuing a similar line of employment, to gain the triumph over the disagreeable impression; but alas, fate itself seemed to conspire against her peace; the volume was of an ancient appearance, and the part at which she opened treated upon the

age at which paternal and maternal authority over children ceased. The very title of the page was by no means prepossessing, for the duchess felt conscious that reason was not on her side, and she was equally aware that flattery was not to be found in the volume, which would not suppress the voice of truth and common sense, to gratify her wishes. She hastily skimmed over a few lines, just sufficient to convince her, that the author would have considered Ernest justified in marrying whomsoever he pleased, and, when she had made this discovery, being too much incensed even to think of her snuff-box, she hastily rang the bell, when her faithful and most unsullied attendant, Miss Burnon, immediately made her appearance.

“Burnon, Burnon!” exclaimed the angry duchess, pointing to the obnox-

ious book which she had hurled to the other end of the table. "Do you read books, Burnon?"

"Sometimes, an't please your grace's grace, I venture to turn over a leaf or two, while waiting for your grace's commands!"—was the reply of poor Burnon, who pretty clearly saw that something was as it ought not to be, although, for the soul of her, she had not penetration enough to discover what that something might be.

"Look at that vile, abominable, impudent, book!" returned the duchess, her voice gradually rising as she proceeded—"Do you read such books as that is?"

Then Burnon advanced to the table and looked at the book, and saw clearly

“enough that it was the very identical book over which she had been poring for the last hour or two. She accordingly dropped a very humble curtesy, such as she was always accustomed to drop in the presence of her mistress, and replied very faintly in the affirmative, summoning up courage enough to stammer out in no very distinct tone—  
 “An’t please your grace’s grace, I did not know it was impudence.”

“Not know it was impudence! Saucebox!” returned the duchess—  
 “Not know it was impudence to teach young folks, mere chits of boys and girls, that they had a right to think for themselves and act for themselves, while they have fathers and mothers alive, whose right and duty it always is, to think and to act for them.”

“An’t please your grace’s grace,” said poor Burnon, trembling to her toes at the idea of her own boldness—“It only says when children come to a certain age, and I think——”

“You think! You think!” replied the duchess, almost frantic with rage at the impudence of Burnon in presuming to contradict her—“What right have you to think?”

“My father and mother are dead, an’t please your grace’s grace!” answered Burnon, in the most modest tone of voice she could possibly assume, and curtsying very low.

“What assurance!” returned the duchess—“When I was a girl, how different things were! Fathers and mothers then, knew how to make their



children obedient, and hence it was that the daughters of my standing all turned out such excellent house-wives. Tell me, impudence, did you ever know me to be extravagant?"

"God forbid that any body should say that of your grace's grace!" returned Burnon, with an ardent sincerity, which was rather unusual in her manner; and immediately added—"I never saw your grace's grace give away a single sixpence to any poor wretch, let him want it never so much, and I admired your grace's economy!"

"Aye, to be sure you did, girl, and so does every body!" answered the duchess. "Is not my name up all through the island for my prudent care of property. And as for your poor wretches who want it, there are parishes

for them to go to. Don't I go to the parish, and does not the parish support me, and all my family? No, no, I am not going to encourage any thing like waste of property. But as to that book there, Burnon, whom does it belong to? Is it one of your buying?"

"An't please your grace's grace," said Burnon again—"The book belongs not to me, but to yourself; and I borrowed it from the upper shelf in the library."

"To me! to me! The book belong to me! What, that vile, abominable book! Heavens, how I will go and abuse Scratchhard for sending me such a filthy and improper publication." And then the duchess ordered Burnon to give directions for the carriage to be prepared to go immediately to the shop

of Scratchhard, who was her grace's bookseller, in order that she might have the felicity of venting upon him, poor pious man! (for he was one of the fanatic class of religionists) some portion of the anger which swelled so high and so boisterously within her, and for the vent of which, she could not possibly find sufficient scope at home."

It was just as Burnon had left the room upon this mission, while the duchess was walking up and down the room, with the snuff-box in the one hand, and this most obnoxious book in the other, rehearsing the eloquent and emphatic harangue with which she intended to greet the ears of poor Master Scratchhard, that Lady Charlotte, after dancing from room to room, half over the whole mansion, in search of her grandmother, made her appearance in the apartment,

and, most assuredly, had she picked for an opportunity more unfit and unpropitious than any other, she never could have found a worse than the present.

“ Well, Miss Minx, and who sent for you, and what is your business ? ” — was the greeting with which her ladyship was received by the intemperate duchess.

“ My uncle and aunt, my dear grandma, are down stairs, and want to have the happiness of seeing you,” said Lady Charlotte, in a very mild and submissive voice, for, as she wished to do a service to Duke Ernest and his duchess, she was cautious to avoid every thing which could give offence.

“ Uncle and aunt,” echoed the duchess — “ They shall be no uncle and

aunt of yours. I won't own them for son and daughter, I am determined I won't; and you knew my resolution before this time, hussey, and it is of a piece with all your impudent conduct to come plaguing me about it, it is."

"But I thought, grandmama, that you might have altered your mind, and I only came to find you out, to know if it were so or not. My uncle desired me to see if you were at home, and disengaged, for he is very anxious indeed to see you, and to pay his respects to you. Do, pray indulge him, grandma!"

"Me indulge the disobedient, ungrateful fellow," answered the duchess, without checking her pace for a moment—"Me encourage him to act in defiance of all the laws of propriety and

decorum, and God and man. Am I not his mother, and had I not the sole right of disposing of him where and to whom I pleased? No, hussey, I won't see him: I won't go where they are, and they shan't come where I am: and you may go back and tell them what I say, and that whenever I wish them to come here again, why, I'll send for them; and, if they value my happiness, they will never presume to come hither until I do send."

Lady Charlotte looked very inquisitively at the duchess, but did not venture to make any reply to this interdiction, for she saw that to irritate her, at this moment, might be to close the door for ever against any reconciliation between her grace and Duke Ernest and his wife. She still paused and pondered, however, as undecided whether she

should go immediately to the duke and tell him, in as gentle a manner as possible, the unsuccessful issue of her interference, or whether she should remain a little while longer in the apartment, and see if the whirlwind which agitated the feelings of the duchess would presently subside.

While she was still lingering in this state of incertitude and irresolution, Burnon returned to the library, and informed her grace's grace, that the carriage was waiting to convey her to Scratchhard, to give him the lecture she designed for him. The trusty attendant, at the same time, brought cloak and hat, and all the other appendages of her grace's dress, which the duchess took from her, and, although very irregular and indecorous in a person of her elevated rank, put them on

herself, with her own hands, and, having finished this novel employment, she advanced to the door, and just before she reached it; turned herself about to Lady Charlotte, and exclaimed—"I desire you to carry my commands to Ernest that he never venture to come into my house again until I send for him; and, as to his wife, let her never hope to be acknowledged by me, for I have made up my mind upon the subject, and am not to be altered."

"Is it the pleasure of your grace's grace that I should accompany you in the carriage?" asked Burnon, in the mild and modest accent of subservience.

"No!" vociferated the duchess; and then casting a very significant look behind, rejoined—"Take care, and don't



employ yourself in reading improper books, Burnon." And as she concluded this expression, she bounced out of the room, without condescending to cast another glance or word either at her granddaughter or her attendant.

"What does my grandmother mean, Miss Burnon?" asked Lady Charlotte, as soon as the duchess had fairly got out of hearing, immediately adding—"I never saw her in a worse humour in my life. And pray what did she mean when she talked something about books, for I could not at all understand her?"

Burnon then explained to Lady Charlotte every circumstance which had taken place from her entering the apartment at the call of the duchess, to the close of the conversation about the obnoxious book, and the resolution of her

grace to go instantly to Scratchhard her bookseller, and lecture him for putting such a book on her shelves.

“ Poor Scratchhard ! ” exclaimed Lady Charlotte, laughing heartily at the idea — “ Well, I would really give something handsome if I could get into some sly corner, and hear the substance of the conversation which will take place. There my grandmother will whisk into his best dining room, and begin — I could never have thought Mr. Scratchhard that you would have abused the confidence I reposed in you, when I left it to you to arrange my library for me. Then Scratchhard will lift up his eyes and hands, and look most grievous at the charge, and reply — I, your grace, abuse your grace’s confidence. I solemnly declare, I always endeavour, so it please your grace, to discharge my duty conscien-

tiously to all. • But, pray, your grace, how have I been so unhappy as to incur your grace's displeasure? Then her grace will produce the book, and say, Do you know this book, Mr. Scratch-hand? Did you put that on my shelves? Then the bookseller will handle it, and turn it over, and answer in the affirmative, and say it is the work of a man of great talent, morality, religion, and virtue; and then grandmother will cut him short, and ask what he could mean by introducing such an improper work into her library. Then he will stomach the word improper, and protest he could not see any thing ungodly in it, which were the only kind of books he called improper: and then she will ask him, if he does not know she has got children of her own, who are none of the most dutiful in the world, and that she has got a grand-daughter (meaning me) who

is a very shocking termagant, and that if any of us had got hold of that book which encouraged disobedience to parents, she should never from that moment be able to be mistress of her own house, nor to have her own way in any thing in the world. Then Scratchhard will humbly ask pardon that this thought never once had found its way into his brain, and confess the danger of putting *such* books in the way of *such* contumelious persons. And after this, my grandmother will read him *such* a lecture. Lord ! I would not be in his place for all the books in his shop, for I should not a bit wonder if she does not take the volume she has brought with her, and, by way of winding up the business so, as to leave an impressive effect behind it, knock it about the poor devil's ears."

Poor Burnon could not, for the soul of her, help bursting out in a fit of laughter once or twice during this harangue, but although such behaviour was by no means reconcilable to the laws of etiquette and proper subordination, Lady Charlotte was not so strict as to appear angry at the breach, but, as she finished her speech, she gaily tripped to the door of the room, and looking back as she went out, cried—"Take care and don't employ yourself in reading improper books, Burnon."

Lady Charlotte, in the height of her natural gaiety of heart, had, for a moment, ~~lost sight~~ of the very ungracious message with which she had been entrusted; but she had not skipped a dozen yards from the door of the library, before it recurred to her mind in all its

gloomy force, and immediately clapped a buff stop on the full tone of her feelings. "Alas," thought she to herself, "how can I be so giddy as thus to indulge in levity and thoughtlessness at the very moment that I am charged with the elements of unhappiness to my uncle and aunt, for whom I had interested myself, and whose cause I undertook to plead! Perhaps, if they had employed a wiser advocate, they might have succeeded in working upon the duchess to receive them into her house, and their hopes might not now have been doomed to a premature annihilation."

This internal soliloquy had brought her ladyship to the door of the apartment where she had left Duke Ernest and his duchess, while she went upon the errand which had so unpropitiously terminated. She paused a moment to

resolve upon what manner of breaking the affair she should adopt, but a sudden movement in the apartment disturbed her reverie, and she hastily threw open the door, and with a jerk of indignation, as her grandmother's angry reception of her flashed across her mind, she without thought or hesitation, conveyed herself into the apartment.

The duke and duchess, with no inconsiderable anxiety in their countenances, advanced to meet Lady Charlotte, and the former taking her by the hand, exclaimed—"Now, my dear girl; tell us quickly the result of your application. Is my mother at home? Will she see us? Is she inveterate? Does she—"

"You are always in such a hurry with your quantity of questions, Er-

nest ;” said the duchess, interrupting him—“ Don’t you see that Lady Charlotte is puzzled where to begin to answer you. Let me ask her a question, and we shall hear something about it. Pray, my dear Lady Charlotte, how did the duchess receive you ?”

Lady Charlotte shook her head and sighed ; but, for a few seconds, stood without making any reply. At length, she began—“ Curse upon that book and old Scratchhard too. Had it not been for it I should have succeeded.” And then Lady Charlotte gave a succinct account of all that had passed during her interview with her grandmother, softening down the asperity and positive tone of the latter when she forbade the duke and his new spouse from re-appearing at her mansion, and thus leaving the hope alive that time and perseverance



might succeed in bringing about that reconciliation which, at present, they had sought for in vain.

The duchess, however, bore the disappointment with a feeling which partook but little of philosophic; and began immediately to reproach her husband for having deceived her with assurances which were never likely to be realized. The duke, on the other hand, renewed all his protestations and promises with redoubled fervor, and entreated her to wait with patience, and she would find that the duchess would by and by court the reconciliation she now shunned.

With this assurance her highness was forced to appear content, and shortly afterwards, the uncomfortable couple left the mansion, to repair again to the

residence of Narcissus, to concert what measures it would be most prudent to adopt, leaving Lady Charlotte in a very pensive mood, which very soon after the departure of her visitors, originated a sort of mental argument on the subject of matrimony. "It is rather queer," said she, "to be situated just as my uncle and aunt are, and all through marrying against my grandmother's consent. How plaguy inveterate she seems to be about it: yet, it is but a few months ago, since she did all in her power to make me marry against my mother's consent. Every one endeavours to argue so as to suit their own views and intentions. I won't marry at all, and that's poz: I don't like the look of the thing. All the folks I know or have heard of, are not happy in their marriage. No, I won't marry; that is, unless my mind very materially alters, for I am sure it is all a lottery."

In the mean time Duke Ernest and his wife had rather a comfortless journey home. The latter had no sooner left the company of Lady Charlotte, than she embraced the opportunity of renewing her reproaches against her husband, and reminding him how many better opportunities she had been offered of settling herself in life, where there would have been no opposition of parents, no surly mothers-in-law, and which was perhaps of more consequence than all the rest, she might have gained, by the surrender of herself, a husband who might have deservedly enjoyed a high character for valour, and truth, and good faith, independent of certain qualities of person which she said he wanted,

Duke Ernest endeavoured to parry all these taunts and reproaches with as

good a grace as he could, and promised her highness, if she would be pacified and kind, he would immediately dispatch a special messenger to Narcissus, to procure him to return and interpose with his mother, to bring about a reconciliation; and he assured her that Narcissus possessed such influence with the duchess, that he was sure the issue of his interference would be a general reconciliation of all parties, and the perfect re-establishment of a permanent good understanding.

“ You are deceiving me again, as you have often deceived me before !” replied the duchess — “ I cannot depend on a word you say. You have brought me into a proud family for no other purpose than to sacrifice my happiness, and you will succeed, I am sure you will. Fool that I was, after marrying two

good husbands, to be at last entrapped and brought to misery and despair by such a ——”

“No hard words, my pretty duckling,” returned Duke Ernest, putting his arms round her neck, and intreating her to condescend to give him a kiss, a request with which she reluctantly complied — “I will not deceive you. I never deceived you. Circumstances deceived us both. My brother shall come; he is my friend, and he has great power, and here I swear by all that is sacred, that what I say is true; and on the faith of this oath, I do conjure you, my love, to rest satisfied and happy for a few days longer, until things may come round.”

The duchess shook her head, doubtfully, but told her husband that she

would once more believe him, and after this agreement the rest of the journey passed free from jarring, and, immediately on their arrival at home, a special messenger was dispatched with a most earnest letter from the duke, requesting the attendance of Narcissus to reconcile the differences in the family, and restore the blessings of harmony.

## CHAP. XXI.

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*Curious directions for a supper—Country landlords not courtiers—A trick played upon Doublechalk, which puts him in a terrible quandary—The magnanimity of Narcissus spares his life—Arrangement concerning Milabel—Arrival of Ernest's messenger, and preparations for a retrograde movement.*

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“WHAT will your most gracious grace's grace have for supper?” asked the landlord of the inn at Ashley, where Narcissus and his retinue stayed their progress after the gloomy perils of the night which finished the second volume of this work. Narcissus, although he had attempted to laugh the circumstance

off as a thing not worth serious thought, had once or twice had strange sensations in his region of feeling, where, whatever some folks may have written or spoken to the contrary, he was particularly susceptible, when his memory strayed back to the logs and trees which were laid across the road. They could not have been placed there without hands, that was a clear case; they could not have lain there through the day, or the carriage road would have been stopped; consequently, they must have been brought there at night, and for purposes specially mischievous: it was known that he was coming, and there was no doubt that the plot was levelled against him.

Such was the turn and tincture of the thoughts of Narcissus, just at the time the landlord asked the question;



no wonder, therefore, that it remained without an answer.—The host stood with great humility for some time, bowing and scraping to attract notice, but finding it was all in vain, and that Narcissus did not seem inclined to make him any, the man took courage, and boldly asked his highness again, what he would be pleased to command for his supper?

“Plots and conspiracies, by G—d!” said Narcissus, in a voice neither very remarkable for the mildness nor the courteousness of its tones.

“Your highness shall be accommodated,” answered the polite landlord, and retired, bowing most lowly, looking most bewildered, and not once turning his back upon Narcissus. Whether this well-bred retreat of the host, namely,

his retiring from the presence of Narcissus without turning his back upon the great man, was the effect of a superior education or of fear, it may not be very difficult to illustrate by one or two plain axioms. First of all; landlords of country inns, although very frequently men of sound sense of the common kind, are not educated, in general, very near a court; not so near as to acquire more than one of the traits of a courtier's character, which is, that of fawning where interest points the way, and plundering with one hand, while they kiss the other in token of reverence. Secondly; the habits of this kind of men, seldom initiates them very deeply in the modes, formalities, and etiquette, usually practised at these places. Thirdly; supposing they might by accident, have heard or read of a courtier going out of his lord's presence.

backwards, to the great peril of his poll, &c. landlords of country inns are not likely to retain in their memories matters and things which are certainly not very relevant to their business. On the other hand, the bare idea of an order for "plots and conspiracies," as supper dishes, was very well calculated to make even a man of the most simple and uncourtly intellect suppose the person demanding such fare, must be a little deficient in that sagacity, pertinacity, correctness, and harmony of intellect, which is denominated reason; and, consequently to induce him to feel some apprehensions lest an injury might be attempted against him by the individual who had thus addressed him.

He had left the room a few minutes, before Narcissus recovered himself from the fit of abstraction into which he had

fallen, and when he did so recover himself, Mahony was standing immediately opposite to him with his eyes fixed upon him with no small astonishment and consternation mingled. "Eh! Mac," said Narcissus, after looking, in his turn, for a few seconds—"Why, what the devil are you staring at me for? Are you quizzing me, Mac?"

"No, your highness," returned Mac; "but I was just thinking how you would like the supper you have ordered, or whether you might be disposed to change it."

"Supper! what supper have I ordered?" asked Narcissus, with some surprize, and adding instantly—"Why, Mac, you or I have certainly lost our senses."

"Perhaps I may, your highness," returned Mahony—"for I certainly will swear that you have just ordered *plots* and *conspiracies* for your supper."

"Thou art mad as eve poor devil was in the world, Mac," answered Narcissus—"What the devil should I do with food so difficult of digestion? But I'll be judged by the landlord, Mac: if he agrees with you, I'll submit to be called mad for the next six months; if the contrary, thou shalt have a sorry time of it."

The bargain was struck, and Double-chalk was summoned, while poor Mac blessed himself; for, although the fact was clear as the sun at noon day, it was not likely that the landlord would dare to tell Narcissus to his face any thing which could have a tendency to convict

him of absurdity. He accordingly calculated upon being worsted in the arbitration which had been arranged, unless by any ingenious interposition, he could ward off the consequences he feared.

Doublechalk now made his appearance with his napkin tucked under his arm, and, in a most obsequious voice, begged to receive his highness's orders—"Come here, host!" cried Narcissus. The landlord came close to the chair of the great man—"What did I order for supper?" asked Narcissus.

"Supper! supper! order for supper!" stammered the host, whose fears now all returned in double force, and who was almost terrified to death lest he should utter a single word, which, by irritating his illustrious guest, should

render his situation more forlorn and desperate. "Your highness, I really forget the particulars ; but I gave them to my cook, and I will go and ascertain for your most gracious grace's grace, in a few moments, with your grace's permission."

"Not for the world," exclaimed Narcissus— "I must know this very moment. You don't leave the room till you have told me the whole truth."

"Bubble and squeak, your highness—Bubble and squeak!" replied the happy landlord, across whose pericranium a sudden substitute shot to relieve him in his most terrible perplexity ; "Bubble and squeak!" reiterated the host a dozen times, rubbing his hands with evident extacy as he spoke.

“Huzza! huzza!” cried Narcissus,  
“Now, Mac, who is mad? You or I?  
Bubble and squeak? What the devil  
induced me to order beef and cabbage?  
Zounds, Mac, I begin to think I am  
pretty nearly as mad as you are. I  
never had a particular *penchant* for  
such an *orang outang* sort of a dish.”

“The man has deceived your highness,” responded Mac; “believe your faithful Mahony, what your highness ordered, was *plots* and *conspiracies*”—

“That is what I call *bubble* and *squeak*, your highness,” returned the landlord, dropping on his knees, as he continued,  
“I pray your gracious grace’s grace to pardon me for presuming to speak jestingly in your high and mighty presence; but beef squeakings and



cabbage bubbles always remind me of plots and conspiracies."

It was now Mahony's turn for exultation, and he was so elated at the idea of his escape from new mortifications, that he did not even take his usual pains to conceal his triumph; a circumstance which was not calculated to raise him in the opinion of his master, who, above all things could not endure the idea of being outwitted. The disappointment of Narcissus, too, on this occasion, was doubly heavy, since he had considered himself already possessed of the victory, when the unexpected explanation of the bubble and squeak, occurring in a moment, overthrew all his fancied laurels, and determined him a madman for six months, according to the stipulated agreement. He looked gloomy, for a few moments,

and revolved in his mind, whether he should vent his spleen upon Mahony or Doublechalk, when prudence for the first time for many years that she had ventured to approach him, whispered to him that Doublechalk was a stranger, and, consequently, that less injury could result from offending him, than from estranging Mahony, who was, on all occasions, his most obsequious lacquey and *fac-totum*.

“Scoundrel,” said Narcissus, seizing the humble landlord by the collar, as he was still upon his knees—“How dare you presume to talk of such things as *plots* and *conspiracies*. Your whole country seems to be made up of such combustible materials. Here, I am but just escaped from the danger of assassination on the high road, before I am

threatened with poison conveyed through the odious medium of bubble and squeak. I'll have your whole country put under military law, I will."

"Poison! Heaven many years preserve your gracious grace's grace," exclaimed poor Doublechalk—"Oh, Lord, I shall be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and all my property *sold*, and all my children *confiscated*, and only for saying bubble and squeak instead of plots and conspiracies. Oh, d—n all plots and conspiracies say I; and let no honest man hereafter say bubble and squeak, without looking to see if there is a hole in the wall of the room or the window through which the treason can escape. Oh, d—n all plots and conspiracies, and bubble and squeak, and the devil take the day that made me the unfortunate landlord of the—"

“ Out upon your odious noises, varlet,” exclaimed Mahony, “ you’ are committing worse treasons now in stunning the ears of his highness with your balderdash stuff. If you didn’t mean to poison his highness, he will be so condescending as not to hang you ; so get you gone, and send us some wholesome supper.”

Narcissus had relaxed his grasp upon Doublechalk’s collar, and the poor landlord, thrice happy at being rescued from the gripe of his guest, hastily replied, “ I’ll send the cook to receive your gracious grace’s grace’s orders about the supper ;” and without looking behind him, he rapidly bounced out of the apartment.

“ D—n me, Mac,” said Narcissus—  
we funk’d the old one ; drove him into

cover in a devilish sweat. Poor devil! I dare say he is delighted that he is not now dangling from some lamp-post, or tree, as a fit recompence for his impudence, in daring to speak with a jest in his mouth before my very august countenance."

"I do not doubt it your highness," replied Mahony, "but as the poor devil meant no mischief, I dare be sworn your highness will not scruple to take an extra glass for the good of his house. But, zounds, your highness, I wonder what has become of poor Milabel all this time. I dare say she droops in your absence."

"The girl is decent in every respect," answered Narcissus — "and answers very well for purposes of temporary recreation. When we get home, Mac, I

mean to give you a mark of my especial favor. You have been accustomed to look out for me; and now it is my intention to turn over Milabel to you."

"Your highness is too kind and condescending," replied Mahony—pretending to wipe the tears from his eyes—"much too condescending to your poor, and unworthy servant; I never aspired to such a distinguished honour, I do assure your highness; and if it will occasion your highness one single pang to part——."

"Devil a one, Mac, devil a one," responded Narcissus—"By the time we get home I shall have had quite enough of her. Besides, I must not introduce low company at home. That would not do, Mae; that would not do. Must

keep up something like a decent dignity of appearance, you know."

It was accordingly agreed on the instant, that as Mahony had now his whole house to himself, and could do as he would, without being subjected to give an account of his conduct, he should take Milabel to himself immediately on their arrival at the metropolis of the Fever-isle, so that Narcissus should be left entirely unshackled to go after higher game; and this point being settled, the word of honour of Mahony was exacted that he should not poach before the time.

The rest of the evening passed away with tolerable eclat. Doublechalk, who had pretty well recovered from his recent alarm, introduced the supper with

a vast number of congees, and in return, received a gracious smile from Narcissus, who complimented the host upon his intrepidity, and invited him to come to his mansion at the metropolis of the Fever-isle, where he promised to make him ample amends for the alarm which he had been made to undergo.

But Doublechalk was a man of too much sagacity to accept the invitation of his illustrious guest. He had read and heard very strange things about the character of Narcissus, and the impression thus made upon his mind, was, by no means, of a momentary duration; but had created in him a fixed and firm resolution, sooner to eat the bread of honest industry, earned by the toil of his fingers and the sweat of his brow, than to gain a more ample, but less honourable, subsistence, by pampering the



corrupt appetite, or flattering the avaricious ear of an individual whom, whatever his rank and station, he could not revere.

When Narcissus, therefore, invited Doublechalk to visit him at his mansion, the independent landlord, who was rather nettled at the joke which had been put upon him just before, and which his perturbation prevented him immediately from detecting, promptly replied—"Your highness is kind to invite me to your mansion, but I have many concerns to manage, and gadding about the country would but poorly agree with my interests! I must mind the main chance, or else, when some of our money-scrappers come for dues of me, I should cut but a sorry figure, and the honour of my visit to your highness would be called sorry payment."

Narcissus did not much admire Doublechalk's bluntness, but policy required him to put on a smile, and he obeyed and swallowed his supper with a tolerable relish; and, no sooner was the meal finished than Milabel was sent for to give an additional zest to the wine which flowed abundantly, until both the illustrious Narcissus and his faithful attendant were both happy to avail themselves of the assistance of Doublechalk and his waiters to get to their beds.

It was the dawn of the following morning which brought to Astley the messenger from Duke Ernest, earnestly recalling his brother to settle matters on a friendly footing with his mother. Narcissus and Mahony had just seated themselves at the breakfast-table, when the dispatch was presented to the former, who, supposing the contents to re-

late to mere matters of business, and being too indolent himself to peruse them, gave the packets to Mahony, and desired him to read them aloud to him, that he might digest the answer he should send them, at the same time that he digested his coffee, rolls, marmalade, and brandy.

Mahony, accordingly, obedient to the command of his master, broke the seal; and hemming two or three times, to clear his vehicles of sound, read as follows—

“ Dear Narcissus—By the lord Harry,  
“ if you don’t come back to your man-  
“ sion, the fat will be all in the fire.  
“ I have brought my wife over to the  
“ Fever-isle; and this very day have  
“ been trying the experiment of a visit  
“ to my mother; but, in spite of all

“ that your daughter, Lady Charlotte  
“ (who treated us very kindly) could  
“ do, the old lady would not see us,  
“ but left the house in a fury. Now  
“ what the devil is to be done, I know  
“ not; my wife is turned very shrewish  
“ upon the subject, and, unless I can  
“ discover some means of putting her  
“ into humour again, I am likely to  
“ lead but a sorry life of it. I must  
“ rely on your brotherly kindness and  
“ ingenuity for my rescue from this  
“ cursed scrape. Do pray return home  
“ immediately, for I cannot venture to  
“ move a single step without your ad-  
“ vice and assistance.—ERNEST.”

“ Oh Lord! Oh Lord!” cried Nar-  
cissus—“ Come to the Fever-isle too!  
This is a bad business. What a devil  
of a headstrong fellow this brother of

mine is! Well, well, I suppose something must be done for him. What a happy fellow you are, Mac, who have no brothers and sisters, and mothers, and the like, round about you, to plague you to madness. Zounds and the devil, I wish I had never interfered in the business; the old lady is as stubborn as a mill-stone in spite of all my efforts."

"But, your highness, the duchess is handsome and amorous, and I dare say will have no objection to be grateful—very grateful," replied Mahony, slyly.

"Oh, I am down upon you," answered Narcissus, laying the forefinger of his right hand against the side of his nose—"I understand you, Mac! Good

thought! cursed strange that it never should occur to me. Something may come of it. Gratitude is a great friend of mine, though I never admitted her within the doors of my heart. No, no, she could have no business there. Others may be grateful to me, but I have no cause to be grateful to any body in the world: I confer favours on females, and have a right to expect a recompence; they are all gratitude, and cannot bear to appear unkind in return for obligation; so gratitude pioneers the way for me, and then you know, I do as I like. You know this, Mac, eh! Oh, Mac, you are a cunning fellow, a very useful fellow; could not do at all without you. Must think of making you some handsome compensation bye and bye. Eh, Mac! How should you like to be a duke?"

Then did Mahony put his hand to his chin, and pull up his neckcloth, and rise from his chair, and bow most profoundly, even to the very ground, before he ventured upon a reply, for it was probably the first time in his life that his thoughts had ever so much aspired, and he could not, in a moment, regain his composure, which had been completely thrown off its balance by the suggestion of the possibility of such a distinguished reward for his services. At length, however, he began—"Dread sir, pink and mirror of men, honeycomb of rank, and essence of greatness, what can I say? Like to be a duke! 'Sir, I should expire with extacy, for I have something like ambition in my nature. But to be a duke! 'Oh Lord, sir, I very much fear your highness is only jesting with me."

“ Never more in earnest, Mac, upon my honor !” said Narcissus, laying his hand upon his left breast, by way of giving a more impressive effect to the declaration ; and then, looking kindly upon Mahony, he resumed—“ Yes, Mac, you shall be a duke, I am determined. You will make a very good duke ; and, let me see, you shall be Duke of Jackalls ; and I shall create a new order of knighthood on purpose to instal you and a few more of my very select friends, and I have some intention of christening it the order of Pander ; but more of this at another opportunity, Mac ; for the present, we must prepare to return to give some aid to Ernest.”

“ Your highness stands unexcelled in virtue,” cried Mahony, bowing again,



as Narcissus left the room to dress for his departure ; and, no sooner was his back turned, than his *fac-totum* immediately began to soliloquize upon the new honours which awaited him. “ A duke ! a duke ! Zounds, what a thing it will be for me to become a duke. This hand, and these fingers——I have seen dukes with worse ; nay, truth to tell, I think my master’s are not so handsome. My valet will come into my bed-room about noon—Will your grace—your grace—wish to wear your blue embroidered coat, or your green silvered one to-day. Then my grace will assume airs of dignity becoming my high rank, and marry—no—d—n me, I won’t marry again, I’ll be free and independent ; for what is the use of being a duke, if I am to be night and morning hated by a woman. No, I won’t marry. I’ll subdue all the

girls, and have more concubines than Solomon; for I am determined I'll enjoy myself. Then I will sit in the great councils of the island; and speak, no I won't speak,—for I have read a fable when I was a school-boy, something about an ass who got a skin of a lion and put it on, and passed for a lion some time, all the beasts ran away, and the whole realm of the forest paid him homage, but the fool must one day speak, and egad, as soon as the animals heard him bray, they found out the cheat, and plagued the poor devil with long cars—No, no, I won't speak, I am determined; I'll do any thing but speak. Zounds, I shall be but a small duke, but no matter, size is no consideration; I have known dukes full as small as myself, yet much loved and revered." Thus did poor Mahony,

by anticipation, enjoy all the delights of his dukedom, until his reverie was broken by a summons from his master to attend him in finishing his preparations for their immediate departure.

## CHAP. XXII.

- Some reasons why lords of manors take journies through their estates, and a little insight into the true motives of Narcissus—A tale most terribly told, and something about the practices of certain great persons—A good deal about the management of manors, and a digression elucidatory—*
- *A little digression on the subject of digressions—Reveries, and an agreeable surprize.*

• THERE have been lords of manors in other times than those of which the author of these pages writeth, and in other places than the Fever-isle, who, as some writers have informed us, were accustomed to travel through their ma-

nors, not for the purpose of destroying the birds and animals which inhabited the woods, but with a stupid and silly view of informing themselves how matters went on amongst the tenantry:—whether this man kept his land in good order: whether that could afford to pay the whole rent which was required of him; whether the stewards and agents discovered any partiality in their management, or resorted to modes of individual oppression; and whether all things were conducted with due order and decorum, and in every respect, as they ought to be.

But not so was the case in these more advanced and enlightened ages of the world. Lords of manors, now-a-days, (meaning the days of Narcissus, &c.) had fallen into the practice of acting in every transaction by deputy Narcissus.

left his matters, or the affairs of the island, to be managed at the pleasure of a few of the principal tenants, and he did not trouble himself whether things went well or ill, so that he was not much troubled and pestered about them. He had no better object in view, in going over his manor, than to hear himself applauded wherever the people were in the humour for it; and to obtain a diversity of scene, and a complete change of life, of employments, and amusements for a short time, just for the sake of relieving and enlivening the dull monotony of the old routine.

Such being the great object of Narcissus, he felt no disappointment in retracing his steps to his metropolis, because he could renew his journey with pleasure at his own convenience, and bend his progress in a new direction,

more prolific in sources of entertainment than the country in which he now was. It was about an hour before sunset when the travellers bade adieu to Ashley, and turned their horses towards the metropolis; and the sun was still gilding the tops of the distant mountains when they passed the gloomy spot which was the scene of their yesternight's dangers and apprehensions, and which forcibly recalled the remembrance of all which took place.

"You must confess, Mac, you were terribly alarmed," said Narcissus, eying his *fac-totum*, who was immediately about to return the charge, in a very tuncourtier-like manner, when the promised dukedom suddenly shot across his brain, and prevented all the long train of possible consequences which might have ensued.

“ Yes, your highness, I was a little startled,” returned Mahony—“ but I have been uncommonly nervous ever since I was stopped last winter near to Brightbaystone.”

“ Stopped ! you stopped, Mac,” returned Narcissus, in a voice of apparent astonishment—“ never heard a word of it before. What time was it, Mac ?”

Mahony immediately resumed—“ I’ll tell your highness the story again. I was just coming through a narrow part of the road—egad, it was not unlike this, and about the same time of the night, and the evening too was somewhat like ; I had just got under a huge oak tree which branches over the road, when, suddenly, four men, at least, or there might have been half a dozen of them, jumped from behind the hedge,



armed with blunderbusses, muskets, pistols, and swords——”

“ For God’s sake, ‘Mac, don’t mention the abominable catalogue,” interrupted Narcissus——“ leave the rest for my imagination to supply. I hate the names of the spitfire machines, ever since the day when——but I won’t recal the image of the past. Well, Mac, you must have been most intolerably frightened——go on, Mac !”

“ Blunderbusses, muskets — I beg your highness’s pardon—I mean certain dreadful instruments of an offensive description. Sirrah, said the first, ‘and he held one of his fiery bull-dogs close to my head—Give all your cash, and jewels, and plate, and goods and chattels, and notes of hand, and draughts, and deeds, and leases, and releases——

“Halloo, the unconscionable rascal,” vociferated Narcissus—“What the devil, did he think you carried every thing you possessed in your pockets? You are quizzing.”

Then did Mahony swear that he never had an intention of presuming to quiz his illustrious master, who was by far too acute and clever to be imposed upon by any wit in the universe, and then did he vow that this was the first time he himself was ever taken for a wit; and then, also, after this preface, did Mahony swear to the truth of all he was saying, and declare that the oratorical rogue went through all the vocabulary of property, just as he had named it, “and” continued Mahony—“leases, and releases, and indentures, and mortgages, and reversionary transfers, and stock receipts, and—the villain conti-

nued—every other kind and description of property whatsoever or where-soever situated, lying and being, of which you have become seised and possessed, whether in your own right, or the right of your dearly beloved wife Mrs. Mahony, or any other."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! One of old Pimple-nose's tricks for a guinea!" cried Narcissus, holding his sides, and laughing most immoderately at Mahony's technical tale of distress—"Done just to frighten you a bit, Mac. I see it all; I see it! fine fellow, for fun and frolic. My life to a glass of hock, it was Pimple-nose's trick."

"Your highness's sagacity is most comprehensive and astonishing," returned Mahony—"for when I began to ransack my pockets, and to offer to the

plunderer, my pocket-book, purse, and watch, the scoundrel burst into a loud laugh, in which he was joined by all his unprincipled companions, and, all of them discharging their terrible weapons, which, your highness may readily imagine, put me into a devil of a funk, and made me tumble from my horse with mere fright and apprehension, they turned their animals short round about, and away they galloped, laughing in full chorus, and leaving me half covered with filthy mud, and half dead with alarm. For the life and soul of me I can't bear guns, blunderbusses, and the like ever since that time; nor can I hold my hand steady."

"It was old Pimplenose, I'll pledge my life for it," answered Narcissus—  
"But did you never get a clue to find

the rogue out? how got you home, Mac?"

"A farmer came by with an empty waggon, and saw me floundering just like an eel in a mudhole; so, your highness, he stopped his team, and asked what the devil had put me in that plight. I told him the devil, I believed, had attacked me in the shape of eight or ten highwaymen, and had knocked me off my horse, and battered and bruised me more than ever the knight of the woful countenance was thumped and bumped in his life; and that, if he was going to Brightbaystone, he would be doing God and a gentleman service, if he would make me a soft bed in his waggon, and carry me and my horse without shaking us to atoms.

“ And old Hodge, I suppose, clapped both the beasts into his waggon together, and carted them home !” said Narcissus, still laughing at what he called an excellent joke.

“ He did so, your highness,” returned Mahony, “ but not until he had dislocated all my whole members, and jointed all my dislocated ones into their own sockets again. Oh, I shall never forget that night, your highness, if I live a thousand years. A fortnight after I dined with your highness, when Pimplenose was present. I did not suspect him then ; but he *queered* me, and *quizzed* me, and tipped his winks round the table so freely, and seemed to laugh at me or about me so very often, that I thought there was something in the wind ; and, though I never could fathom

it, your highness has given me plentiful light upon the subject all at once."

"It is the practice of the old boy," returned Narcissus—"and two or three times I have been within a trifle of making one upon some excursion of this description; but, I always feared we might meet with something serious, which might make the affair end altogether otherwise than might have been intended. I am fond enough of jokes, and hoaxes, and little bits of frolic, but I don't like them when there is any danger mixed amongst them. I was always a prudent jester, you know, Mac."

This was a very candid admission of Narcissus; for though, in truth, there can be no impropriety in men of such mighty rank and importance conde-

scending now and then to frighten those who are beneath them, in order to ascertain the true temperature of their intrepidity ; and, although young lords of this same manor had, as the records of the isle inform us, ages back, been given to such spirited recreations, the Fever-islanders, of the generation of which these pages treat, were such a slanderous and impudent race of people, that they did not scruple to condemn such practices openly and violently ; and even to go so far as to declare that lords of manors ought to be punished when they played such *tricks upon travellers*, just as the tenants themselves would be, if they were to pursue such caprices to the alarm of the community.

They had said thus much repeatedly ; and as Narcissus had no great wish to



be abused by every hedger and ditcher upon his manor, although his native independence made him care but very little what was said of him, he was right to conceal any propensity of this description to which he was subject, if he was subject to any, and only to mention loosely and in confidence to his *factotum*, that he had been well nigh tempted once or twice to venture himself into such situations as those which were likely to call down upon him a mass of obloquy from his ill-natured tenantry, who were too much disposed to be ever on the watch to detect a flaw in his character and conduct.

The day passed on, and the journey drew nearer and nearer to a close. The resolution of Narcissus it was to reach his metropolis and his home that evening; and as no circumstances had oc-

curred during this tour, to lessen his old antipathy to travelling in the dark, every exertion was made by the drivers to supersede the necessity of scouring dark, gloomy, and dangerous roads during the night. Notwithstanding their efforts, however, the sun had gone down, while the travellers were yet at a distance of thirty miles from the place of their destination ; and, although Narcissus felt less terrors, in consequence of his hourly approach to a more lively part of his manor, yet he could not entirely divest himself of the apprehensions which held him under controul, and which it is right to hope, were more the result of education than of any bad practices ; but trembled a little as the gathering clouds foretold the approximation of the demon of the storm.

His highness's fears, however, were in-

this instance void of any thing more than an imaginary foundation ; no trees appeared to impede his progress ; no laughing peasantry stood tittering at the village doors to cause alarm to his susceptible mind, for the boors and peasantry, as he drew nearer the seat of his own extravagance, as the Fever-islanders were accustomed to say, were too poor and wretched, too much bowed down by the iron hand of power and oppression, too leanly fed, and too much beggared in their scanty resources, to shew generally those indecent symptoms of merriment which had in a remoter district offended the ears of the mighty Narcissus. Wherever he now saw, by the gloomy light which issued from the windows of the humble cabin, the tenant within, he appeared to be leaning over his scanty fire, whelmed with sorrow and care ; or in other places, he might

witness the cottager strudging to his door with a scanty loaf of bread, under his arm, and half a score of ragged children standing on the threshold, and holding out their little anxious hands to supplicate the immediate relief of the cravings of nature. With such pictures before his eyes, had Narcissus been of a different temper of mind from what he was, he might have fallen into gloom and despondency, and have given his moments to the toil of reflection; he might have overstrained his nice and refined intellect in devising means of making these wretched objects less wretched, and, of magnifying by his own personal example and exertions, the little sum of happiness which seemed to be the lot of those about him. But, no; Narcissus was too wise and too prudent to rush upon unnecessary care and toil;

he husbanded his intellectual faculties for better purposes; he loved to disseminate joy in narrower circles; to create eddies of pleasure round his own table and his own person; but to leave the diffusion of general bliss to his advisers, whose business it was, more than his, to attend to the interests of the manor. If we ask, what was his exact province? he would doubtless answer us—"Enjoyment, the great end of human existence."

It is so in smaller manors, *parva componere magnis*, where the lord commits not only his own, but the interests of all his tenantry to some favorite steward, who, perhaps, by flattering his master's weaknesses, pandering to his pleasures, and supplying him with the means of dissipation, whenever called upon for

that purpose, has wormed himself into his confidence, and rendered himself more necessary to his lord, than his lord is to him. For a time, he continues to accommodate his master with the funds necessary for the promotion of all his disorderly views; and these he raises by oppressing the tenantry, exacting from them more than they are able to bear, pursuing measures of unjustifiable rigour to enforce immediate payment, and borrowing of the more opulent upon usurious interest. The tenantry, pinched and oppressed to the lowest extreme of suffering, become dissatisfied, and appeal from the steward to his lord; but the latter, aware of the necessity of keeping upon good terms with his servant, either lends a deaf ear to all the complaints and remonstrances which are laid before him, or instantly refers the matters

of the petition, &c. to the steward himself; who, armed with indisputable power, and burning with rage against those of the tenants who have been hardy enough to endeavour to stir up strife betwixt his master and himself, redoubles his cruelties and oppressions upon the proscribed remonstrators, pursues them as far as he may or dare pursue, sanctioned by the connivance of his master himself, until at length the poorer and most useful of the tenants throw up their farms, and seek a better landlord; and the richer, who have lent money upon the mortgages of the lands, resort to legal measures to recover their own, and after a short struggle, turn out both the lord and his steward, and divide the manor among themselves, in discharge of their own debts.

Where the analogy holds good, the

reader will not want penetration to apply it: wherein it fails, let the over-drawing of the picture here sketched be attributed more to the wish to make it a finished picture in itself, than to a design to make it an exact likeness of the state of the manor of Fever-isle. Although there may be something pretty synonymous in the characteristic of the stewards, none is intended or pretended in those of the lords. The author would not be guilty of so glaring a deviation from strict fact as to declare Narcissus to be extravagant in his expenditure, careless of the means whence he derived his resources, deaf to the true interests, and the prayers and remonstrances, of his tenantry; or so infatuated and attached to his stewards, as to leave it to them to reply to the complaints which reached him. Nothing could be farther from his intention than



to impute any thing of a vicious tendency to the illustrious object of his memoir. Follies there may be, some in the great mass of human excellence, for who can plead an exemption from the *amalgama*, which nature has mixed in the metal of which she made man ; but wherever he hath formed a light shade of folly, be it remembered by every reader, of high or low degree, whatever his vocation or avocation in life, that he only designateth it a shade of folly, which appeared while the powerful radiance of his highness's dazzling intellectual rays was, for an instant absent from his brain ; a *venial error*, to use the words of the LAW of the Fever-isle, when classifying crimes which had nothing to do with the heart.

But to quit digressions, and digressions, although sometimes very neces-

sary to eke out a chapter, or to make out the exact quantity of matter which the bookseller requireth for his "I promise to pay, &c." are as often very tedious interlopers in a work, as they are of a contrary description. A digression is sometimes an illustration, as in the instance which is now before the reader, and, in such case, it is not liable to the charge of superfluity, whatever may be said of its tediousness. The author, however, after escaping the Scylla of superfluity, lest he should get bumped on the Charybdis of tediousness, proceedeth with his story.

Night had hung out a few of her lamps when Narcissus and Mahony were blessed with the sight of the artificial lamps which dimly besprinkle the various roads into the metropolis of the

Fever-ise! The very sight of these symptoms of ~~home~~ raised the spirits of Narcissus, as rapidly as the influence of a good kitchen fire would have elevated the quicksilver in one of Fahrenheit's thermometers. They were up at "boiling water" in the space of sixty seconds; and although they uniformly fell about twenty degrees every time the carriage passed by a dead wall, they as regularly recovered themselves on the first glance of a row of lamps.

There was a long silence between Narcissus and Mahony; for the former, to do him justice, had dropped into a reverie about his brother, and was really, *mirabile dictu*, THINKING what could be done to bring about the reconciliation which was the object of the visit of Duke Ernest and his duchess to

the Fever-isle. He felt himself in much perplexity upon the subject; for he stood committed to his brother, and must, therefore, go through the business with him, at any risks, while there was the slightest possibility of effecting the ultimate end. At the same time, he was far from wishing to quarrel with his mother. He knew her temper too well, to wish for any dispute; for it was impossible to calculate the probable consequences of a falling out. No calculation could embrace them, for they must depend entirely upon the caprices of the moment. The duchess might in a fit of spleen and anger, make those discoveries of a family nature which she would be the last to divulge, while under the influence of right reason, but which were very likely to escape from her when right reason happened to be dozing or absent from her post. She

might adopt expressions which might get abroad; and well he knew that if half hints only got wind, and reached the ears of the tenantry, there were never wanting persons to fan the flame they made, to fill up the deficiencies upon the ear, and to make a plausible and most mischievous story out of very raw and very scanty materials. All this occurred to his mind at the same moment, and so suspended his determination that he could not come to any resolution as to his future conduct. He shuffled and shuffled about upon his seat, to no purpose, and at length the effervescence of his feelings produced an ejaculation — “What the devil shall I do?”

Mahony, in the mean time, had fallen “from thought to thought,” until at length he caught fast by the image of

Milabel; when imagination began immediately to run riot in the pictures which she drew of future enjoyment. Yet even pleasure brought a pang with it; for the expence at which the pleasure was to be purchased came glaring upon his mind, and dimmed the lustre of anticipated happiness. Mahony was an economist, and loved to have his pleasures *grat*is; and herein he imitated his master, who, actuated by the same principle, doubtless, had consigned pretty Milabel over to Mahony, in order to get rid of the cost of maintaining her, and finding her necessary apparel, employment, &c. This thought had just struck Mahony, and it raised a confliction in his bosom of a most desperate nature. Avarice advised him to return the present of his master, and save his money. The love of pleasure persuaded.

him to use her for a little time, and then to copy Narcissus, and to transfer her to a meaner possessor: and the latter thought pleased him so well that he had quite recovered from his momentary dejection, and was again under the influence of cheertfulness, when the—  
“What the devil shall I do?” of Narcissus, came loudly upon his ear.

Mahony stared for a moment, but did not venture to reply instantly. After giving himself a few moments pause, however, for reflection, he determined to avail himself of his usual privilege of speech, and had accordingly turned himself half round upon his seat, and was just on the point of making some kind enquiry into the cause of his master's troubles and perplexities, when the carriage suddenly stopped and put an end

to his intentions ; and in a moment a valet opened the door of the vehicle, when the amazed travellers, with no small astonishment perceived that they were at home.



## CHAP. XXIII.

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*A peep into domestic life, and a view of nothing extraordinary — The terrors of a husband, and the dissatisfaction of a wife — Tenderness rebuked, and a little sparkle of manhood which glimmers and grows prodigiously — The beneficial effects of manliness — Domestic harmony, and a new conquest.*

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THE time which elapsed betwixt the dispatching the messenger to Narcissus, and the arrival of the latter, was devoted by Duke Ernest to shew to his wife the various curiosities, and objects worthy of notice, which were to be found

in the metropolis of the Fever-isle; partly, perhaps, out of pure affection, and partly to keep her highness's temper at peace; for he justly feared that too much leisure would naturally enough leave her so much opportunity to mould and elicit reproaches, that he had much reason to fear the consequences which might accrue. He accordingly made great professions of tenderness, talked largely of the pleasures which were to be found in the island, and concluded with proposing that she would accompany him to see the performance of one of the productions of the most ingenious poet which the island had produced, and which was just on the point of commencing at the time he made the proposal.

The duchess assented to the request of her spouse—"Not," said she, "that

I anticipate any particular gratification from a visit to your theatre; for I do but insufficiently enter into the spirit of your language; but it will assist to beguile the time, until your brother Narcissus may be able either to come in person, or to send an answer to the dispatch you have just forwarded to him. "Pray when is it likely that he will be able to receive and to answer it?"

"In eight and forty hours, my love, at the furthest," replied the duke. "Perhaps, within less time than that we may see him, for I have directed the man to travel through the night, so great is my anxiety to give pleasure to my charmer, to her who is the sole source and centre of all my earthly joy."

"Earthly nonsense!" exclaimed the duchess—"Don't be always thinking

of such stuff, Ernest; but, if you have any brains, which I am very much inclined to doubt, do prithee employ them in inventing some mode or other, by which we may succeed in bringing your mother round into a good humour. Do you think I can have any enjoyment in this manor, when I recollect that she who is at the head of it, shuts her doors in my face, and will neither notice me herself, nor recommend to the principal persons who are about her to notice me? Didn't you deceive me at first; and have you not deceived me again, when you prevailed on me to come over here by telling me a pack of nonsense, about what you could do with your mother, when you could introduce me to her!"

Her highness was now touching upon that string which of all others, Duke

Ernest had wished and studied to avoid. He determined, therefore, to get rid of the subject as soon as he possibly could, for he foresaw nothing but a tremendous storm, unless he could find out some ready means to divert its progress—"I have not, my dearest love," said he, taking out his watch—"indeed, I have not deceived you; and time will shew you that I am all truth and affection. But we must be going; you will scarcely have leisure to change your dress. Let me recommend it to you to make as much speed as you can. We have not an instant to lose, and I must go and give a few orders about a little business, and direct the carriage to be at the door." While he was speaking, the duke had crept sideways towards the door, in order to facilitate his egress, and just as he had finished his speech, kissing his hand to the duchess, he has-

tily opened it; and with one motion much more rapid than graceful, succeeded in extricating himself from a situation very uncongenial to his feelings.

“Mercy on me!” internally ejaculated the duchess, as Ernest closed the door after him—“sure never was poor unhappy woman more likely to be plagued out of her senses by a stupid husband than I am by mine: I am in a pretty situation truly. Here, like a great bear in the woods, I have already contrived to drive away my spouse, who, I’ll be bound for him, in another month will tremble at the very sight of me as much as he would at stepping into the way of a crocodile, or a tiger, or an elephant. Well, well, I shall be able to rule him, that is at least one comfortable reflection; and having found out this secret,

I shall be able to have my own way in every thing. Shall I be happy then? I fear not; for life is but a listless sort of a thing, if there is no contradiction in it. How I should have preferred to have met with a man, who could have hectored, and blustered, and opposed my wishes now and then, just in order to have exercised my feelings a little. Then I could have stormed, and stamped, and cried a little now and then, until I had gained my own way; and there would have been a pleasure in the victory; but always to be tied up to a twig, which bends just as you bend, and gives no scope for the exercise of your strength, oh! it is a sickening lot, and if Heaven, who took away my other two husbands to another world, would but favor me once more, I should feel myself but little the worse for my loss."

Thus were the reflective faculties of the duchess employed for some minutes after Duke Ernest had left the room, and the same train of thought her highness carried with her to her dressing-room, when she went to dress herself to accompany her husband to the theatre; till by the time she was fully prepared to make her appearance, she had reflected herself into a very critical kind of humour, of which it must have been absolutely necessary to have given the duke a gentle hint, to prevent the harmony of the evening from being disturbed, had not her highness herself, by her very manner of giving her husband her pocket handkerchief to carry to the coach, sufficiently warned him of the state of her disposition towards him and all about her.

For some minutes, a dead silence en-



sued the starting of the carriage. "It was that kind of calm which is as much to be feared as the storm ; and the duke felt so alarmed during the whole of its continuance, that he dealt pretty bountifully in self-reproach, because he had been so unfortunate as to propose this trip of pleasure, and did not rather prefer to meet her reproaches at home, to the double disappointment which seemed now to stare him in the face.

" My love !" at length his highness ventured to exclaim, and handed to his duchess a bottle of otto of roses, in a gold case, with all the grace he could command.

There was something very melting in the air and manner of his highness as he performed this act of gallantry, which was admirably adapted to appease the

angry workings of the female breast; for although Duke Ernest had not particularly studied the art of engaging the fair sex, he could by dint of great exertion assume one of those interesting glances, and that tone of sentimental tenderness, which are almost sure to find their way to the heart. Yet he failed in this instance; all his interest, and sentiment, and tenderness, could not succeed in tranquillizing the perturbation which racked the mind of his duchess.

She did not put aside the bottle with a correspondent grace and gentleness; nor in a twin tone of tenderness, did she decline the intended favor. No, there was neither conciliation in her manner, nor honey in her voice, when she knocked the devoted otto of roses out of his hand, and fiercely exclaimed—

“ Away with your trash, I despise both it and you. Give me a man of vigour, and soul, and spirit, who dare try to govern me, and none of your white-livered sort.”

A flash of lightning could not more completely have struck poor Duke Ernest, nor Priestley's huge electrifying machine have more perfectly electrified his highness, than did this uncourteous retort. In vain did he rack and puzzle his brain to discover of what offence he had been guilty against the sacredness of beauty ; and it is but strict justice to him to declare, that upon searching over all the tablets of his memory, he found nothing recorded against him. He then began to digest the terms of the repulse — “ Give me a man,” &c. Reason immediately whispered in his ear that he was by much

too yielding a spouse; that he was too pliant and complaisant, and thus had laid the foundation of the contempt with which he had been treated. He then began to recal to mind instances where females had been brought to reason by a little wholesome severity and vigour of conduct, and that husbands, who like rushes, might be bent and twisted any way, were only fit subjects for the ridicule of their fellow-creatures. The duke could command a tolerable degree of firmness upon a pinch; and the more he considered this matter, the more he felt convinced of the urgent necessity of having recourse to all his stock in the present instance. He, accordingly, picked up the bottle, which was preserved from injury, by its case; and putting it into his pocket with the utmost coolness and composure imaginable, his highness calmly pulled down

one of the glasses of the carriage, and putting his head out at the window, ordered the coachman to turn about, and return home.

There was something decisive in the tone of his voice as he gave this order; and as the coachman was turning about the carriage to obey, by the glare of the lamps, which came full in at the windows, the duchess obtained a full view of the countenance of her husband, which presented to her a scene at once as novel, as it was astonishing and alarming to her. For the first time since she had been married, she began to suspect that there was something like firmness in the character of the man to whom she was united; and totally at a loss was she to know in what manner she could conduct herself on the occasion.

Not a single word had Duke Ernest spoken, since he had delivered his commands to the coachman, but having reclosed the window of the vehicle, had thrown himself back on the seat, and lapsed into a profound reverie. One moment he felt himself half inclined to make another advance of a tender description, and gave way to something like a feeling of compunction for the momentary harshness of manner into which he had been betrayed by intemperate feelings; then again would the taunting words of the duchess recur to his memory, and affection would take flight, and stern resolution assume her seat. After he had paused, however, for some time, and reflected and pondered, and pondered and reflected again, he came exactly to the same point whence he had set out, and at the termination of his fit of cogitation, found

himself just in the same state of perplexity and irresolution as he was in at the moment he had spoken to the driver,

In the mean time, rage, astonishment, and grief, by turns, swayed the feelings of the duchess. Every thing appeared like a dream; she could not convince herself that all this was real, that such a wonderful change could be the effect of a moment. She must have been the victim of delusion; he had been affecting a character which did not belong to him, and had put on the mask of tenderness and pliancy only for the purpose of fathoming her disposition; and now that he had discovered that it was by an opposite behaviour that she was to be made a good wife, he was about to throw off all disguise, and to appear before her as he really was. The more she

reflected, the more she felt satisfied that this was the case, and she was now at a loss how to conduct herself, so as not to lose his confidence and affection, for it was evident to herself that she liked him the better for the discovery of his new character of firmness. After considering for some minutes whether she should storm or reproach him, she abandoned both designs as fruitful in danger; and, applying her handkerchief to her eyes, burst into tears, and sobbed audibly.

This was a most severe and masterly attack upon Duke Ernest, who sat and repented most bitterly within himself of the rashness of which he accused himself; yet a feeling of shame tied his tongue, and he still remained silent, until his spouse, her stock of patience and hope almost entirely exhausted, with a voice broken by sobs and appa-



rent anguish, stammered—"To what am I to attribute this insult? Was I then brought away from my own land, and kidnapped into this Fever-isle, in order that, at a distance from my relations whose vengeance you dreaded, you might behave to me with as much insolence as you please? Oh, I am the most unhappy woman that ever was born! Would to God that I had died with my last husband, and not have subjected myself to this most vile treatment!"

Any other manner of address might have effected a change in the duke, and won him over to kindness and repentance; in short, might have undone all which his paroxysm of determination had done; but the words of the duchess served rather to increase than diminish the resolution of her spouse, who, in a

voice of less kindness than he had ever before adopted towards her, replied—  
“Madam, I am only seeking to gratify your own wish. You despised me when I was always pliant and affectionate, and desired a spouse of spirit who would learn to govern you. I shall, by changing my character, endeavour to merit your esteem.”

The duchess now perceived that she had gone too far, and had too much presumed upon the softness of the character of her husband. She even began to suspect that, instead of being the kind assiduous lover, she should now begin to behold him an obstinate and determined tyrant, and her fears for the probable consequence of her own folly wrought so much upon her feelings, that half in earnest, and half with a view to put her husband's affection and resolu-

tion to a more determined trial, she gave a sort of smothered shriek, in a tone scarcely intelligible, murmured—"open the window for air!" and immediately fell back in the carriage.

What shall I do now? thought the duke, again lapsing into penitence for his hasty anger, and putting his arms about her at the same time, to endeavour to restore her to herself. The duchess was not so far gone as not to notice the attentions of her husband; and, for an instant, she felt inclined to repel them with every symptom of apparent contempt, but prudence stepped in in time to prevent her from falling into too common an error, and, instead of shewing indignation, she called a flood of tears to her aid, and pressing the hand of Ernest to her lips, exclaimed, in a tender and very impassioned

tone—" You know, Ernest, you know I love you !"

The triumph was hers from this moment : had the duke been gifted with a ten times larger share of vigour and resolution than what he possessed, all must have vanished at this soft confession. It was more than she had ever said to him since they had been united ; and although he congratulated himself upon having extorted the expression by means of his sternness, he was too shortsighted to see the enchantment with which he had suffered these magic words to encircle his reason. In a fit of rapture, he immediately clasped the duchess to his breast, and half smothering her with caresses, he replied—" By heaven, my dearest angel, I was too much of a novice to discover it before, but your confession of your love, at this

moment, has made me, from the most miserable, the happiest of mankind."

"And won't you tell the coachman to drive back again to the theatre?" asked the duchess, in a tone of doubt and tenderness mixed—"Or if you wish it, Ernest, I will give up my intention; although I confess that, as we did set out to be amused a little—yet, never mind, it is my duty to consult your pleasure."

"Drive back to the theatre!" said the duke, putting his head out at the window, and calling to the coachman, who, muttering an inaudible curse or two, at the whimsical disposition of his master and mistress, and speculating a little upon the possible cause of this fluctuation of opinion, turned his horses, and returned.

There was nothing particularly striking in the performance ; but the duchess had gained her end and was satisfied. She had built no expectation of amusement from the theatre ; but the moment she found her husband ordering the coachman to turn homewards, nothing would have equalled her disappointment, had she been compelled to go without having a peep at what was going forward ; and the success of her operations against the determination of Duke Ernest had given her a degree of pleasure which it was impossible for any scenic representations, however novel, or however excellent, to equal. In this temper of mind, she contented herself with gazing for a few moments upon the tenantry, some of whom paid her marks of respect which, being considered as due homage, communicated no pleasure, and then, addressing herself

to her spouse, informed him that she was perfectly at his disposal, whenever he might feel an inclination to quit the place..

The journey homewards, and the rest of the evening passed in mutual harmony, for Duke Ernest was no more disposed to offer any thing like contradiction to the duchess, while she appeared in her present condescending and affectionate disposition ; while she, on the other hand, was still too much pleased with her victory, to feel any inclination to make a new attack upon her husband's patience, and each indulging in self-gratulation for imagined victory, both went to bed in good humour.

The morning dawn found the happy pair still enjoying their victory over each other, and when the duke, after

breakfast, intreated permission to escort his spouse to view all that was worth seeing at a large public institution, appropriated for the reception of all the science and valuable literature of the manor, which has, at great pains and cost, been accumulated, she assented with a graceful readiness which gave her husband new cause to congratulate himself for the events of the preceding evening, which had already produced him a larger share of happiness than he had previously enjoyed since the morning of their marriage.

• Duke Ernest, in the progress of this journey, and by his endeavours to explain every object at the institution which was worthy of notice, made great way in the good graces of the duchess, who began to think that the little spark and effervescence of spirit which he had



displayed on the preceding evening had shed a strong light over his character, by means of which she had discovered a great many perfections in his mind, of which she had hitherto been ignorant; and, in consequence of this discovery, she began to improve in her opinion of his qualifications to appear to some advantage, in the character of a husband. Now and then, it is true, the affair of the insurrection at Tzell would rise upon her recollection, and create a momentary feeling of contempt, but the impression soon wore away, when the more recent display of determination and vigour shot across her mind, and established the claims of her husband to the title of a man of some spirit.

The whole of the day witnessed nothing but the reciprocation of kindness, and even the subject of their mother's

obstinacy, which was revived at the dinner-table, brought with it no reproaches, to the great gratification of Ernest, who was so elated at this happy change in his domestic life, that he indulged in the most copious libations of wine, and drank to such excess, that when his valet entered the apartment to announce the arrival of Narcissus, after several violent, but totally ineffectual attempts to rise from his chair and quit the room, he was compelled to surrender to his wife the duty of receiving his brother, and introducing herself. The duchess, however, acquitted herself with such inimitable grace in the performance of these duties, and apologized in such a winning manner, for the transitory indisposition of her husband, that Narcissus was pierced to the heart in twenty places, before she had got through her apology; and when he at-

tempted to make a suitable reply to her highness, cut much such a sorry figure as his brother Ernest would have done had he been able to command the use of his legs sufficiently to have given his brother the meeting; while Mahony, who stood close behind his master, and, plainly enough saw the deep impression which the duchess had made upon the feelings of Narcissus, tittered within himself, as he anticipated the new intrigue which instantly suggested itself to his fancy, as likely to arise out of this new importation of foreign beauty and perfection.

## CHAP. XXIV.

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*An interview with an illustrious personage, and its unfortunate termination—A new proposition, the result of imperious circumstances—Narcissus undertaketh to tranquillize the duchess, with some account of the manner in which he went to work, and succeeded—A good deal about nothing at all. .*

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THE arrival of Narcissus perfected the apparent harmony between Duke Ernest and his wife, more especially as his highness expressed his determination instantly to proceed in his endeavours to bring about that reconciliation so fervently desired by all parties. The duchess herself was much taken by the

attentions which the brother of her husband took every opportunity of paying to her, by the soft stream of flatteries which he took occasion continually to pour into her ear, and perhaps more than all, by the evident rank and power which he possessed, and the homage which seemed to be offered as due incense to him from all quarters.

Narcissus, in the mean time, did not suffer a moment to escape unimproved. He assailed the ear and heart of the duchess incessantly, scarcely allowing her time to breathe betwixt his attacks, until he was compelled to part from her for the evening, when he ventured to steal a salute which was scarcely cold enough to be quite brotherly, and which the susceptible penetration of the duchess instantly as it was received, placed

to the very account for which it was intended.

On the following morning, Narcissus and Ernest went together to the Duchess of Whelps, determined to make one vigorous attack upon her feelings, and to bring forward all their battering train of arguments, to compel her to quit the strong hold of obduracy and anger, behind which she had entrenched herself, and from which so many unsuccessful attempts had, from time to time, been made to dislodge her, or to force her to surrender her prejudices.

The duchess was at home when they arrived, and was busily engaged in reading a lecture upon obedience to Lady Charlotte, when the servant, as he had been instructed by Narcissus, announced

his arrival alone, lest the coupling of his name with Ernest, might produce an effect hostile to their views.

Much surprized as she was at the visit of her son, whom she had imagined to be at a great distance, the duchess instantly ordered him to be admitted, and hastily advancing to meet him, with something of surprize and alarm upon her countenance, was about to enquire into the reason of this very sudden return, when the sight of Ernest, stepping into the room behind his brother, sufficiently explained the meaning, and placed at once a check upon her tongue. Her highness upon this discovery, contented herself with exclaiming—"How is this, Narcissus? This is a visit altogether unexpected, I had almost said, unwelcome."

“Nay, mother,” said Narcissus, advancing, and taking the hand of his mother—“let us have an end put to all family quarrels. I have travelled many a mile since yesterday morning to bring about a reconciliation: Ernest is sorry to have offended you; and his wife is most anxious to be received by your highness. If I have any influence with you, you must not turn a deaf ear to my mediation. Ernest, do you speak for yourself.”

“Upon this, Ernest advanced towards his mother, and, bending one knee to the ground, was about to take her hand, when the duchess drawing out her snuff box, at sight of which Narcissus lifted up both his hands, began to bespatter her nose with such extraordinary violence, that nearly two thirds of the powder fell upon poor Ernest, who at-



tempted in vain to commence an harangue. After sneezing about a dozen times, he, at length succeeded in eliciting — “ My dear mother (*a sneeze*) God knows my heart (*a sneeze*) I truly honour my parents (*a sneeze*) and have never been happy (*a sneeze*) since I offended you, my dear mother (*a sneeze*). Do pray extend your forgiveness to me, for, indeed, I am very (*a sneeze*) penitent; and you may believe me, so is my dear duchess” —

“ Don’t mention her name,” interrupted the fuming duchess — “ Don’t mention her name to me; for I will not hear a single word about her. I hate her, and I hate you, Ernest; and I am determined to hate every body that speaks to me in your favor. I’ll teach my women to swear, on purpose that they should — No, I won’t do

that ; but I will not allow your name to be mentioned to me. And as for your wife, Sir, you had better take her back again to the country you had her from, and stay there with her if you please ; for you know you have been deceiving me ; you have broken your engagements with me ; for you were not to come near me, to plague and perplex me. You have no regard for me, but you want to drive me out of the world, I see you do. And, as for you, Narcissus, I desire you will never come to me upon this business any more, or else you and I shall not put up our horses together again, I'll warrant you."

As the duchess said this, she whisked out of the apartment, leaving the two brothers stupified with astonishment and disappointment, neither of them being able or inclined for some time, to break

the silence which succeeded, until Ernest rising from his knees, and commencing with a most emphatic malediction against the snuff, in a tone scarcely less rhetorical and pathetic, looking at his brother, exclaimed — “ What the devil are we to do, now ? ”

“ I have done all in my power, Ernest,” replied Narcissus, “ to restore the old lady to good humour, but it is all to no purpose ; and I see very plainly that the more we plague and pester her while her feelings are irritated upon the subject, so much the farther shall we be from gaining the object we seek after. Another plan must be hit upon ; and, if you will take my advice, the best measure appears to be for you and your wife to have a residence fitted up for you, and there to remain, and make yourselves comfortable for the present.

"until the heat of the business may have blown over a little, and then we will all look out for a fit opportunity of renewing the subject, when circumstances shall be so changed as to render success more certain."

"My dear brother," replied Ernest—"I will conduct myself in every way as you would wish me. But my wife—my wife—I dare not ~~tell~~ her what"—

"Leave her to me, Ernest," answered Narcissus—"We will now return home, and I will instantly see her, and open the subject to her, inform her of the ill success of our journey, advise with her on the mode of procedure I have pointed out to you; and depend upon me, I will not leave her until I have talked her into a good humour. I don't think there is much obstinacy delineated in

the form and contour of her face. Leave her to me, Ernest."

Duke Ernest was to the full as much pleased at the prospect of his own escape from the perilous task of communicating to the duchess the failure of their visit, and the new schemes which must now be projected and executed, as Narcissus was at the idea of being left with the beautiful young wife of his brother *tête à tête*, to pour into her not unwilling ear some of his tender tales, and to try to wind himself into her affection. The author doth not mean to insinuate that Narcissus entertained any designs beyond those of snatching a sweet kiss occasionally or a fond pressure of the hand. She was the wife of his brother, and the reader is cautioned to keep in mind, what he was informed in a preceding chapter, that Narcissus was by

no means a man of vices; that his were only errors or shades of follies, &c. consequently that although he might wish now and then to be a little *foolish* with the duchess, he never could have had it for a moment in contemplation to have been *vicious*. Ernest knew full well the depth of the honour of Narcissus, and, therefore, he felt not a moment's hesitation in entreating him to hold a *tête à tête* with his wife, being well satisfied that though the interview lasted a month, nothing could come of it.

The agreement being entered into and ratified, the two brothers sped their way back to the residence of Narcissus, where the duchess still remained most anxiously expecting the issue of the negotiation. The moment she saw them enter the room, her highness rushed

towards her Ernest, and demanded, in an eager voice, how the matter had terminated? "My brother has taken it upon himself to inform you of the whole," answered Ernest; "and as I have promised him ample opportunity, I shall make two or three morning calls, and not return home until the hour of dinner."

Narcissus seated himself upon the sofa by the side of the duchess, and took her hand in his. "My dearest sister," said he, and then he raised the hand which he held to his lips, and imprinted a kiss upon the back of it, while the duchess made not the slightest effort to withdraw it from his grasp. "My dearest sister," his highness resumed—"Whoever slights you in this manor, my house and my arms—I mean, my heart will be ever open to receive you."

The duchess pressed the hand of Narcissus in return, as she asked — “Am I to understand from your highness’s words that your mother will not?”

“Name her no more, sweet creature,” said Narcissus, and he placed his right hand on her shoulder. “Do not let her resentments have the power to hurt so charming a being. You and Ernest must have a residence fitted up, and live comfortably, and leave it to time to work upon the old lady, and time will bring her round; when you leave off seeking her, she will, bye and bye, come after you. And then you must come and visit me, my charming sister, and I shall come very frequently to see you, and we shall be very happy, if we try to make each other so. What a handsome ear-ring, sister!”



And then the arm of Narcissus slid mechanically round the neck of the duchess, and completely encircled it, while she without affecting to notice the circumstance, answered—"Your highness's goodness more than counterbalances the unkindness of your mother. Yes, I shall still hope to be happy, if you countenance and visit us. But I hope your visits will not be stiff and formal, and made seldom; for that, your highness, will not look very affectionate."

"No, sweet creature, my visits shall be as often as you like, and as free from stiffness and formality as you please; for I declare I shall not be happy any where else. But don't tell Ernest all I say to you. Tell him I will visit and encourage him; but don't say to him, every word I tell you, sweet charmer."

Such was the reply of Narcissus ; and as he made it, he essayed a slight violence to draw the duchess nearer to him." Her highness saw his drift, and feeling no reluctance to encourage the effusions of brotherly affection, gave way to his movement, and, most readily fell forward, until her head dropped upon his shoulder, and her face fell into collision with that of his highness, who, taking advantage of the circumstance, pressed his lips most ardently to those of the duchess.

The situation was most tender and critical ; and if it had chanced that, instead of Narcissus, a gay young seducer had been there, the author would by no means have answered for the consequences ; but his highness was an individual, although of tried gallantry, of tried honour and virtue also, and would

: not for worlds, have encouraged a single thought which was really and genuinely impure. The author supposeth that the reader will naturally be anxious to know what followed the scene above mentioned and described: he professeth not to satisfy idle and impatient curiosity at the sacrifice of truth; and, therefore, declareth that he knoweth of nothing, save and except that by the weight and pressure of the arm upon the kerchief which half hid and half discovered the pretty alabaster neck of the duchess it was discomposed; but not a tittle of mischief was done, to his knowledge. And if the reader wisheth to be informed if any other part of the beautiful dress of her highness suffered disorder, he can only answer that every wrinkle and fold remained in its original state, as far as he knoweth.

"And you will come and see me," said her highness, after a pause of about eighteen minutes, and laying a particular emphasis on the word *me*."

"If there be truth in heaven, I will," answered Narcissus, and his hands remained folded across each other, with all the frigid stoicism of a philosopher. "If there be light on earth, I will come and see thee," resumed his highness, "and strive to compensate in some measure, for my mother's unkindness."

"You will compensate for all unkindness, if you come," answered the duchess—"for I shall always be most happy to receive and entertain you."

Narcissus did not reply for some time, nor did he smile, nor did his arms remove from their stoical position. Surely

something must have occurred to work this sudden change from extreme heat, to extreme cold : there was no variation in the atmosphere ; and there was a good fire in the room. Had any thing occurred ? methinks I hear some quizzical and most curious *quid nunc* cry out. To which I answer—"No, nothing at all."

"I must go and finish my tour ; I shall go away again to-morrow, but I shall soon return," said Narcissus, and instead of looking on one side, he looked at the ground.

"Your absence will seem long," replied the duchess, and she laid her hand on his arm, as she spoke, as it were, with a view to make the impression deeper. But, wonderful to tell, her highness's hand remained just where she had placed

~~it~~ Narcissus neither offered to take it, nor to touch it, his arms remained crossed, and he seemed no more moved by the approximation of beauty, than a wall of brick is at the approach of a stone sent by the hand of a mischievous child.

"I shan't be gone a month," said Narcissus, after a long pause; and, at the same time, he rose and walked to a window, whistling a tune, while the hand of the duchess fell upon the sofa. "I think we shall have some rain," continued Narcissus, and went on—"Is your highness partial to this summer weather?"

There was something certainly most unnatural in the coldness of manner which marked his highness, but the author, on this occasion, doth not venture to decide upon the motives or feel-

ings by which he was actuated ; ~~nor~~ doth he presume to give any clue to the cause which led to this most marked, most sudden, and most extraordinary change, which had taken place. The reader is at liberty to draw his own conclusions upon the subject, and to satisfy himself, as he may, with regard to the probable reasons which so powerfully influenced the behaviour of Narcissus, hurling his passions, in a single moment, from the height of two hundred and ten degrees, to the depth of ten. All mortal men are subject to these fluctuations : the empire of passion is certainly one of extreme difficulty to govern ; the subjects are naturally mutinous and insubordinate ; restlessness is their forte, they are apt to marshal round the heart, upon the slightest occasion, and, unless the head most promptly marches all its forces against them, a moral dismem-

berment instantly ensues. The battle always lies between the heart and the head, and the outward actions are neither more nor less than the tokens of victory hung out by the conquering party.

The duchess herself did not appear to be seriously hurt by the cold manners of Narcissus; she had taken up a volume of poetry which lay upon the table, the production of a celebrated amatory poet of the manor, and, while Narcissus was whistling out, at leisure, his questions, she had commenced reading in a plaintive tone—"Your mother says, my little Venus," when the last interrogatory of Narcissus sounded in her ears; and the long pause which ensued, gave her to understand that it was conformable to decorum that she should give an answer. Turning, therefore, her eye-glass from the volume to Narcissus, she carelessly re-



plied,—“ Summer weather; eh, your highness? Why to say truth, I like weather that is summerish, but I don't call this weather by that name. I like unclouded suns, skies without shadows upon them, and landscapes which are not bespattered with mud. I like the bright green of Italia, and the orangeries of Lusitania, and I think, from all I hear of them, I should like the islands which formed the Elysium of the ancients. But I hope your highness does not compare these with those enchanted scenes, where fancy loves to wander. I hope your highness does not call ~~this~~ summer weather.”

A great deal of this fine language was lost upon Narcissus, who had fallen into a kind of reverie upon his own established character as an excellent shot; his imagination was engaged in committing

sad havoc amongst flocks of deer, and flights of pheasants; he was bestriding over fields crimsoned with the blood of his victims, which lay scattered around in mountain heaps; and at the critical moment, when the duchess made her pause, he had, in fancy, levelled at a fine buck, and his only reply was,—  
“bounce!”

The reply was certainly not the most polite in the world; and, unfortunately, the word was one which Duke Ernest had a habit of using whenever he wished to express disbelief, contempt, or any other obnoxious sentiment; and, the moment she heard it fall from the lips of Narcissus, and applied to herself, she felt something very like indignation rising from her throat, and impeding the accents which she endeavoured to summon to illustrate her feelings on the oc-

casion ; she threw the book she had been reading, with violence, upon the table, and, with a contemptuous toss of the head, rose from her seat, and began to pace up and down the room, her bosom swelling more and more with anger, at every step she took. Still, however, a prudent policy, arising out of a recollection of her situation at this time, prevented her from giving that unrestrained privilege to her tongue, which she so much desired.

In the mean time, Narcissus felt that he had committed a grievous offence against the laws of decorum, and the customs of enlightened society ; for great as he was, and much as he considered himself superior to the usual laws which govern the Fever-isle, to the laws of good breeding, in common with all the rest of his species, he was

amenable; and might at all times be tried at the bar of taste for offences of this description, and was liable to be punished by the contempt of those who acknowledged, and acted under the sovereign authorities of those laws. He felt that he had given just cause for offence in the manner and tone which he had adopted towards the duchess, and was anxious to remove the injurious impression which he was conscious his conduct must have made upon her highness; advancing, therefore, towards her, with returning kindness in his look, he took her hand, and apologized for his apparent rudeness, attributing it to an absence which he could not conquer, and to which he was occasionally subject in spite of his best exertions; and declaring, as he pressed the hand of her highness to his lips, that nothing could be more remote from his wish and

intention, than to wound the feelings of one for whom he possessed such strong sentiments of esteem.

The duchess was too well pleased with this apology to suffer it to be unsuccessful. She accordingly passed the matter off with a laugh, and declared that she considered it as nothing more than a mere joke, and she hoped his highness would think no more of it. "But," said she, with a loud laugh—"what a pretty, elegant expression is bounce!"

"Pshaw, your highness," interrupted Narcissus, who was a little flustered by the disposition of the duchess to give way to a little raillery on the subject—"Let the matter drop. I was mad, a fool, at the moment. Let me beg of your highness not to mention the word

again. . I hate the expression ; it is one particularly odious to me. I don't know what devil possessed me at the moment. But never mind, let the whole of it pass off ; and pass judgment upon me by my future behaviour, and not by the past."

The duchess cordially assented to the request, which was immediately made the ground of an amnesty between them. Her highness kindly placed her arm within his, and began to walk up and down the room with him, and to indulge in that natural jocoseness of manner to which she was so much addicted ; while Narcissus, on the other hand, as if with a view to compensate for the recent rudeness of which he had been guilty, and to replace himself upon that elevated situation which he had previously possessed in her esteem, redoubled the kindness of his attentions towards her, and appeared

to be more than ever under the influence of her attractions.

But did nothing further ensue? methinks some curious reader again asks me. The question certainly savours of something more than impertinence, and conveys a sort of implication upon the prudence of the illustrious pair, and therefore ought not to be answered; nevertheless, wishing to be on good terms with my readers, I will give a courteous reply. "Nothing did occur: for at the moment they were shewing most kindness to each other, Duke Ernest entered the room, and put an end to the *tête-a-tête*, by informing them that dinner was on the table."

## CHAP. XXV.

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*A domestic tête à tête—Fluctuations in the happiness of a conjugal life—Quarrels and reconciliations—Family arrangements—An unexpected and unwelcome visitor—A reference to former parts of this history—The growth of terror, and its climax.*

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NARCISSUS, being under engagements of pressing importance for the evening, Duke Ernest and his spouse were left to themselves very soon after the dinner cloth was removed; and tremendous as appeared to Duke Ernest the task of encountering a colloquy with his wife, so soon after the disappointment of the morning, he saw there was no alternative



but to submit with the best grace he could. He had taken no small pains, during dinner, to make himself acquainted with the humour or disposition of mind in which his consort was, from the few glances he met, and the scanty words which fell from her highness ; and he saw no reason to be discontented with the result of his observations. Although she did not cast at himself any “ sidelong looks of love,” but only a few leisure glances, her general gaze appearing to be entirely engrossed by Narcissus, he saw nothing unkind, nothing calculated to create or encourage despondency in the expressions of her eyes. Although the words which fell from her tongue were extremely few in number, and generally followed the direction of her glance, yet a word or two she did drop to her spouse, and they were burdened with more of kindness than any tinge of an-

opposite description. He, therefore, argued from these grounds, which were certainly loose and scanty enough, that he might escape any serious tempest.

.. The duchess herself too had been, for the last several minutes before Narcissus left the table, engaged in debating within herself, what way she should conduct herself in the *tête-à-tête* which was about to take place betwixt her husband and herself. One moment she determined to attack him with reproaches for the deception he had practised towards her with regard to the disposition of his mother, being convinced, that he must have known her sufficiently not to be deceived himself by the gaudy and unfounded representations which he had made use of to lead her astray. The next instant, she called to mind the glimmering of vigorous spirit which he had dis-

played on the preceding evening, and reflected on the probability of this spark of fire being fanned into a flame, if she made any sudden or violent attack upon him: and, although, as she had rather too unguardedly declared, she preferred this idea of her husband being qualified to govern her, than that there should appear only the poltroon visible in his character, when she came to discuss the propriety of giving too frequent exercise to this infant vigour, reason so violently opposed it, that she determined to be good-humoured.

“Shall I fill you a glass of Madeira?” asked the duchess, throwing a great deal more than usual kindness into the tone of her voice, and laying her hand on that of Ernest.

“There was something in her voice and

manner which absolutely electrified the duke with pleasure. He could scarcely credit the reality of the happiness which seemed, in a moment, to break upon his view, but fancied the whole was some dream or delusion of his ears and eyes. A short space, however, served to convince him that the whole was real: the warm pressure of the soft and fair hand of the duchess thrilled to his heart, and aroused a thousand swelling emotions: he returned the squeeze with a fervour which shewed pretty plainly the nature and extent of his feelings; and, after a pause of a short time, he mustered up ability to make a sort of incoherent reply in words,—“Dearest angel, a hundred—Oh! I am so happy! I could drink for years if you would fill for me! Give me one kiss. Zounds! how happy I am.”

“ But it was rather deceitful of you, Ernest;” said the duchess, with a smile on her countenance, and a tone which appeared to be somewhat of the satirical description—“ it was rather deceitful of you to attempt to persuade me you could easily bring your mother round. Confess, Ernest, that you have not used me quite well.”

There was something in this conduct of the duchess which betrayed a predominating disposition to tyrannize whenever she could venture, or, in plainer and more vulgar language, a desire to wear the breeches; and the moment she saw her husband growing fond and attentive, she very ungratefully selected as the most fit to commence an attack, every idea of which she had abandoned while the idea was prevalent in her mind, that he might grow independent, and

give a check to her purpose. Yet in choosing this moment, if she laid herself open to the censure of the reader as an ambitious and despotic wife, she must at least command the credit of being well acquainted with the weaknesses of human nature, and the most successful mode of turning them to her purpose, or her advantage, whensoever she needed to make the effort. If the reader be inclined to quarrel with her generosity, her affection, or any other of her conjugal qualifications, when he has swelled out the list of accusation to its utmost bulk, he must allow that she possessed a perfect and comprehensive knowledge of the world.

Poor Duke Ernest was struck into a heap by the suddenness of this question. In the paroxysm of pleasure which had instantly succeeded the first tender

squeeze and expression of his spouse, he had completely banished from his memory, and his mind every trace of his mother's obstinacy. Short as the time indeed had been for the adoption of any resolution, he had already determined not to care a straw about the displeasure of the old lady, nor to give himself a moment's trouble about removing it. But now, the scene was suddenly changed again by the few magical words of the duchess; a sudden gloom and despondency overshadowed his whole mind in a moment, and he could scarcely find words to reply—"For God's sake, my dearest duchess, let us hear no more, and say no more upon the hateful subject."

Half resolved, yet half afraid to proceed, the duchess fixed her eyes upon the countenance of her husband to

gather from his eyes some information as to the state of his mind: at the same time, lest she might have gone too far already, she poured out the glass of Madeira, and handing to him, desired his highness to pledge her in the full glass; and gathering courage from the softening manners of the duke, added—  
“Nay, Ernest, I am not going to quarrel with you, for you know I love you. I hate disputes with those for whom I have a regard. But I only want you just to acknowledge for once that you did deceive me, and that you have been much to blame.”

The duchess, as she said this, artfully leaning towards the duke, courted his embrace, while the latter deceived into a belief that she was in truth animated by a feeling of extraordinary kindness towards him, threw his arms tenderly



round her, and, without hesitation, made a full confession of his error in inducing her to believe that which he declared, not upon the faith of his own knowledge, of his mother's determined disposition, but merely with a view to reconcile her highness to the journey to Fever-isle.

“ You do acknowledge then, that you have deceived me by misrepresentations ? ” said the duchess, disengaging herself from his arms, and looking angrily at him.

“ I do, my angelic love,” returned Duke Ernest, trembling violently as he saw the palpable and rapid change in her manner and voice.—“ I do confess it; but it was done with a view to promote the happiness of both of us; and therefore, I should hope, if it be an offence

at all, that it is one of the slightest tinge; and not worth notice."

"Slight, and not worth notice, indeed," replied the duchess. "But it is neither so slight as you imagine, nor so unworthy of notice. If you will deceive me in one thing, you will in another. No matter what lie it is, if it answer your purpose you will utter it. How can I expect to be happy with such a man? There is no such thing as happiness for me. I have been gulled and deluded into a match which will shipwreck all my hopes and prospects. Cruel man that you are to deceive a woman who has reposed such unbounded confidence in your honor and truth, as to place all her earthly happiness in your hands." As she said this, the duchess took out her handkerchief, and, putting it to her eyes, began to shew symptoms

of extreme distress; thus making a most serious attack upon the heart of the duke, who sat shivering in his chair, in a situation of mind not a whit more enviable than that of a poor layman doing severe penance before the altar of the Virgin, while some rascally and interested monk stands close behind him, triumphantly flourishing the scourge which is prepared for his back.

What measure to pursue, or what reply to make, the duke was equally at a loss to determine. Language would not come at his command, although repeatedly summoned; and, therefore, feeling it necessary to make some demonstration which might be likely to work a beneficial effect upon the disposition of his swelling spouse, he took out his handkerchief also, and placing it before his eyes, fixed his elbows on the table, and began to sob in exact concert.

So far, however, was this plan from answering the desired purpose, that it served to inflame the anger of the duchess, who, taking her handkerchief from her eyes, and looking full of contempt and fury at the duke, exclaimed—  
‘sniveller, be gone to your mother, if you have any affection for me, and never see me again until you have, by some means or other, prevailed upon her to retract from the violent promise she has made, and to receive us to her house. What am I to do in this great unwieldy town, without a soul to speak to? How am I to exist without a fashionable and extensive circle of acquaintance—I who have been the life and soul of every circle from my childhood? It is impossible, Ernest; I shall die of *ennui*, unless things are speedily altered.”

Duke Ernest took his handkerchief

from his eyes, and, in a tone of mingled grief and tenderness, replied—"Time, my darling, time will work an alteration."

"Am I to wait for time, barbarian?" asked the duchess, waxing warmer and warmer—"time will indeed alter things. Time will make me withered, ugly, crooked, and fretful: time will take away from me the power of enjoyment, before he gives me the means. If I am only to trust to time, my lot is indeed forlorn beyond hope."

"Nay, not so, my love, we will beguile the tedious hours by varieties of amusement, by change of scene, and by succession of company. To-morrow shall regularly eclipse to-day in pleasure, and all the world shall be ransacked to give you delight. Think of this, my darling, and do not be unreasonable in

your expectations, and we must be happy."

"Unreasonable, barbarous man!" returned the duchess.—"When was I unreasonable? Have I not submitted to be deceived by you time after time, without scarcely venting one single reproach? Have I not endured neglect and insult with the most Job-like patience? And now that things are come to the worst do I display any thing like indecent warmth and passion in my manner or expression? Am I not perfectly cool, and good-tempered, and in the most reasonable mood that ever woman appeared in?" . . .

Duke Ernest, although his heart gave the lie to his tongue, did not dare to answer otherwise than in the affirmative. The spirit of opposition which had so recently manifested itself in his beha-

viour, was now completely vanquished: he had no longer the inclination nor the ability to offer any resistance to the unreasonable impetuosity of his wife. A thousand times did repentance mount the throne of memory, and begin to chide him for marrying so rashly, without previously making himself acquainted with the disposition of the duchess. Before this event had taken place, he was able to walk and talk as he pleased, to chuse his own connections, to give his own orders, to sit at home in peace, to get drunk or remain sober, without consulting any other inclination than his own. Now the case was diametrically the reverse: he was no longer the master of his own actions, and possessed no control over those of his wife: he was obliged in every act of his life, to consult her taste and opinion, and to square his own determination accordingly: he must

consult her eyes and her countenance, to know whether he might speak or remain silent, and was continually exposed to a torrent of reproachful eloquence from morning to night, and from night to morning again. He gave scope to these reflections until they swelled his bosom so high with mortified pride, and feelings of indignation, that the workings of his countenance evidently betrayed to the duchess what was passing within, and acquainted her with the danger which was approaching her, and which menaced her government; and she instantly determined, by a little well-timed artifice, to meet it and repel it before it could ripen and burst.

Assuming a tone of more kindness, her highness accordingly resumed—"Well, Ernest, you know I am all affability and good temper; so I will even look over



this last and greatest of your deceptions, and endeavour to bring down my wishes to the level of my situation. Although I despair of being happy, I will endeavour to be as much so as circumstances will permit. Mutual reproaches will only fan discontent into a fire, and entirely consume the whole of our felicity. Ah, Ernest, it would be well for you, if you were as philosophic in your sentiments as I am. But women have always more strong minds than men. Come, come, Ernest, here's my hand, I was a little too severe upon you; but I will forget it all; and we will now settle some arrangements with regard to our future residence, for I suppose we must have one."

The duchess had again shewn her perfect knowledge of the weaknesses of her husband. All the fire which had been

rapidly accumulating in the eyes of Ernest; the hectic of anger which was gradually throwing its carmine tinge over his otherwise pale cheeks, the furrows which were lengthening on his brow, the dilation of his nostrils which had been perceptibly increasing; all these symptoms of anger suddenly diminished and disappeared the moment the duchess assumed a tone of tenderness, and the first touch of her soft hand metamorphosed all the terrific sighs into sweet smiles and the most soothing blandishments of physiognomical expression. He immediately took her hand, and, with a correspondent affability of voice and manner, returned—"We shall be happy, my darling: Narcissus will visit us; and Lady Charlotte will visit us. Oh it delights me to see you reasonable, and to hear you argue dispassionately upon a subject so intimately connected

with our reciprocal happiness, for no earthly object can ensure us happiness with each other, if we encourage a disposition to snarl and quarrel continually."

The duchess thought proper to give a cordial assent to this assertion; and this heterogeneous pair then dropped all their differences, and began to sketch plans for their future regulation; when, in the midst of these formations of schemes, in came Narcissus and his brother Cam, arm in arm, to the great annoyance of Duke Ernest and his duchess, who would much rather have preferred, each other's company alone, dull and monotonous as it was, to this unexpected visit, which revived in the memory of both the unpleasant rencontre at Tzell, with which the reader, unless his recollection be more than ordinarily treacherous, is already well acquainted.

“ Cam,” said Narcissus, as he brought him into the centre of the room, “ here I have it resolved in my own mind, that you and Ernest should be good friends. I know you should have had the duchess, if things had all went on as we expected ; but that is over. If she preferred Ernest, she had a right, to be sure ; and you must not look cool at him on that account. Come, sister of mine, you must take and join their hands, and let every thing that is past be buried in oblivion.”

The duchess, who had been completely misled by Ernest into a belief that all the valour in the affair between her husband and Duke Cam, had been on his own side, and that the latter had shewn what the Fever-islanders called the white feather, determined, both on behalf of her spouse and herself to shew

a great deal of magnanimity. She accordingly advanced towards her new brother-in-law, and taking his hand, whispered, "Although Duke Ernest is full of courage in avenging an insult, he has ample magnanimity in his disposition, which will ever prompt him most readily to meet the wishes of a brother who comes forward to seek and desire a cordial reconciliation."

Duke Cam looked for a few moments in the countenance of the duchess to ascertain whether she was serious in what she said. "Courage in avenging an insult," said he internally, two or three times; and applied to memory for a solution of the enigma. At length, unable to command his countenance entirely, he tempered down his feelings into a sort of satirical smile, as he replied,—“I cannot doubt my brother's

magnanimity, which I believe to be on a par with his courage."

- There was a sarcasm in the very tone of his voice which to any more penetrating observer, would have been sufficient to shew that there was something in it more than met the ear; but it was lost upon the duchess, who amongst all the faults of her husband, did not set him down for a dealer in direct falsehoods. But to Ernest the sarcastic voice and look of his brother required no elucidation: the image of the conflict, in which he had cut such a sorry figure sprang up before his mind's eye, and he shivered and shook from head to foot, lest any thing should be let fall which would betray him for a man of weak intrepidity to his spouse and Narcissus. He would not trust himself to look at his brother, but with downcast eyes, he

falteringly replied, "I shall indeed be most happy to be on brotherly terms with him;" and then suffered the duchess to take his hand, and unite it with that of Cam, while Narcissus chuckled at the idea that he had at least made one step towards the family reconciliation.

"I was a little afraid, I must confess," said Narcissus, smiling, "that I should have had more trouble to put matters between you upon a friendly footing. But how much to be preferred is this settlement of differences, to that which is called an honourable adjustment. I always hated desperate measures. Imperious circumstances, it is true, have more than once placed me in such a situation; but I always did my best to get through the trouble with as little danger as possible. What say you, my boy Ernest?"

Ernest was electrified at the introduction of this subject, to which he had such a mortal antipathy: and for some time, he could not satisfy himself, but that Narcissus was (to use a fashionable phrase) awake to the whole transaction, and was bent upon quizzing him a little upon the manner in which he had conducted himself on the occasion of his honourable meeting with Cam. This impression, however, wore rapidly away, when the latter, without giving him time enough to collect his thoughts sufficiently for a reply, responded for him.—“Oh, Ernest, as well as myself is no advocate of duelling.” Friendly adjustments are the things for us. I never was engaged but in one thing of the sort.”

“When and where was that?” returned Narcissus, taking a glass of wine in his



hand, and carelessly adding, "I hope you came off with credit for the sake of the family."

The stroke of a straw would have knocked Ernest from his chair; nothing appeared before him now, but exposure and disgrace; he turned pale and red by turns, while his attentive and sarcastic brother marked and enjoyed the variations of his countenance. The duchess, in the mean time, although not a little curious to know what sort of an account of the transaction the duke would give, thought she should highly exalt her own character for generosity, if she stepped forward to prevent a vanquished brother from exposing himself. She therefore, laying her hand upon the arm of Narcissus, exclaimed, "I pray your highness to give the conversation a change, for there is nothing in this subject which

is peculiarly suited to a female disposition. I dare say his highness and his antagonist followed the common routine in these things; they each refused to accept apologies; the ground was measured; the parties took their stand, and fired without effect, or perhaps his highness charitably fired his pistol in the air."

"Not so, my dear sister," said Duke Cam. "If we had followed the usual order of arrangement, I could have promised you no entertainment by the recital; but I assure you, you would be highly gratified by the story, which is ludicrous in the extreme, from the beginning to the end. You must know a lady was in the case. I had loved this frail fair one, and my opponent had very ingeniously stepped in at the critical moment, and—God bless me, what's the matter with Ernest?"

All eyes were turned upon poor Ernest, whose countenance at this moment might have outrivalled the whiteness of virgin alabaster. There was not a tinge of any colour in his cheeks ; his eyes were without expression ; and a most deep sigh broke from his bosom—Narcissus was alarmed ; the duchess herself assumed a decent and decorous sorrow on the occasion, and asked with becoming agitation of voice, “ What in the world had happened to her dear Ernest ? ”

Cam, who was in the secret, was the only one who did not make particular enquiries ; but sat still tittering to himself at the effect of his tale, while Ernest, pointing to the wine, with great difficulty ascribed his indisposition to some noxious ingredient, and faintly begged that he might be allowed to retire. The duchess and Narcissus accordingly placed his high-

ness between them, and conducted him to his apartment, and thus, at least for the present, removed from his imagination the fears of a discovery of his real conduct in the meeting with his brother, and laid the foundation for his partial recovery from the attack which had seized him.

## CHAP. XXVI.

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*In which the author sheweth manifest symptoms of a disposition to conclude—Some matters brought to a close in conformity with the established usages of novel-writers—Various other matters filed off to a point, and the whole wound up by a very sage-like ejaculation.*

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AND now, gentle reader, having conducted thee, by means of twenty-five chapters of interesting narrative, through the principal features of the year Eighteen Hundred and Fifteen, it remaineth for the author to class the residue of the occurrences of this interesting epoch into one short compass, and to present to thee

that which certainly ought to be ranked as a singular phenomenon in novel literature, a kind of *multum in parvo*, which may serve for a finish to the whole production; and leave thee in full possession of all matters which ought to be entitled to thy perusal or consideration.

Duke Ernest did not recover from his indisposition, during the whole of the following day, sufficiently to shew himself at table; and it may perhaps be very questionable to some persons whether he would have recovered even unto this day, had he not received the gratifying information from his duchess that Cam had not only left the house, but was gone completely away from the town, and did not purpose to return again, for divers powerful reasons, for the course of some years, which he intended to devote to travelling abroad, with the view of

picking up a few more correct notions of men and manners than those he had hitherto imbibed. From a conversation, too, with Narcissus, Duke Ernest satisfied himself that the latter had derived no information from Cam on the subject of the meeting, and consequently, that whatever disgrace attached to himself for his behaviour on this occasion, it was not known, and therefore, was no disgrace at all.

The consequence of these discoveries and reflections was the rapid recovery of his highness from an indisposition which he firmly attributed to some deleterious composition in the wine of which he had participated ; and no sooner was he completely restored to his accustomed health, than, under the advice and influence of Narcissus and the duchess, he proceeded to give orders for the pre-

paration of a proper residence for himself and his spouse, until matters should look brighter.

And the duke was stimulated to hasten these preparations by more considerations than one. He was not only anxious to have an establishment of his own, in order to keep up appearances, which always went a great way, not only with the tenants of the Fever isle, but with all the world; but principally to keep away from him his brother Cam, and thus to lessen the probability of any exposure of himself to his duchess, the apprehension of which had fastened itself so strongly upon his mind, that to avoid such an odious *eclaircissement*, he would willingly have renounced all his connection with the manor of the Fever isle, in perpetuity, and have conveyed himself and his spouse back to Tzell, or to any other country in



the world, where the fear of such an event might be done away.

Animated by such a motive, his highness displayed a greater share of manliness and determination, on this occasion, than he had ever hitherto shewn, and had thus made so much progress in the good graces of his consort, that she began readily to reconcile herself to the idea of living with him, even in a state of comparative seclusion, and to speculate upon the prospects of futurity with much less gloom and despondency than she had been accustomed to evince. She, consequently, gradually left off annoying his highness with reproaches so continually as she was wont ; and more frequently treated him with smiles and words of tenderness, and all the long *et cetera* of the blandishments of affection ; and the natural consequence was, the promotion of their mutual happiness.

There was but one thing wanted when the residence was completely finished for their reception, and they had taken possession of it, and that was, the prospect of an offspring. On this subject, however, whatever mutual taunts and reproaches and recriminations were thrown out, they are of too delicate a nature to be detailed in a work of this kind, which pretendeth not to expound the *arcana* of nature, nor the laws upon which she conducts her wonderful operations. It will suffice to remark on this subject, that, whatever blame deserved to attach to either, ought to be fixed upon his highness, according to right reason, because the duchess had, in the course of her prior marriages, given proof to the world, that nature had certainly left nothing undone, in this respect, when she formed and finished off her highness. The duke, however, contrived pretty well to parry off the attacks

which were made upon him; not by the duchess alone, but by his brothers and companions, by uniformly exclaiming, “ ’Tis time enough yet ! ”

Narcissus, in the mean time, having seen his brother and sister safely and comfortably lodged beyond the reach of interruption, made preparations for the renewal of his journey to different parts of his manor ; prior to which, he paid a visit to the Duchess of Whelps, as well with a view to do away any unfavourable impressions which he might have made upon her grace, by his interference in behalf of Duke Ernest and his wife, as to observe how Lady Charlotte thrived under the management of her grandmother ; and whether she was become less high-spirited, and more pliable in her temper.

The first object was fully accomplished by this visit: his highness contrived to restate himself in the good graces of his mother, without much difficulty. During the whole of the interview, the names of Ernest and his wife were only once mentioned, when Narcissus apologized for his interference, and informed his mother that they were fixed in a suitable residence, and were determined to wait her grace's pleasure to be reconciled. With regard to Lady Charlotte, however, his highness went home more fully satisfied than he had ever been before, although he was even now reluctant to receive the admission, that he had adopted towards her ladyship an erroneous line of conduct, that the only effects which had hitherto resulted from it, were to instil into her susceptible breast an unnatural dislike to those who ought to have endeared themselves to

her, by the most affectionate and endearing manner; and that a perseverance in the same steps could only have a tendency to root impressions which the interests of all required to be eradicated.

Yet, although his highness was convinced of the truth of these sentiments, he could do nothing further than to entertain them. By the compact into which he had entered with his principal advisers, he was precluded from acting independent of their suggestions; and he knew full well that they were fixed to pursue the same path in which they had commenced; that they were not men who were open to conviction; their conception and judgment being so clogged and choked up by self-interest and corruption, that there was no crevice through which reason and justice and good sense could enter their minds; that

they were so infatuated and so much in love with their own system, that they would uphold it in all its parts although the political structure were tumbling in ruins about their ears; and his highness, therefore, felt that there was no alternative for his adoption, but, let the consequences of the present measures be what they might, patiently to submit, and to banish all reflections upon consequences which, however appalling they might appear to his apprehensions, like all other the events of futurity, were extremely uncertain of occurrence. After all, he could not suppress a sigh, when he ~~came~~ turned to mind his own folly in turning away his wife and child from his bosom; and, in a weak and criminal hour the losing sight of his power and the dignity of his situation, so far as to lend himself to further the designs of such men as those in whom he trusted.

This train of thought was too gloomy for Narcissus long to entertain: he was not fond of seriousness, and, so well did his high rank accord with his disposition, as to throw into his way continual means of banishing reflection, which was the only enemy he feared. It made a severe attack upon his bosom, at this moment; but Narcissus, fearful of the issue of the conflict, instantly called Mahony to his aid, and began to apply himself so effectually to expedite his departure from his metropolis, that Lady Charlotte, and all the train of thought which she had introduced, were soon driven from his mind, and he was once more the thoughtless man of pleasure—Narcissus was himself again!

From place to place, his highness flew on the wings of eager desire to pursue the giddy phantom of pleasure, through

all the windings and labyrinths of life. From place to place he moved with the celerity of lightning; gaiety and dissipation glittered and revelled in his train. Wherever he showed his face, scared by the dazzling glare of his character, the humble virtues retired within their cells, and closed the door of their habitation, until the gaudy retinue of greatness had passed by. Did he look into their abode to encourage them by his patronage; to cheer them by his smile; by his example to hold them forth to the homage of mankind? No! Did he dispense blessings amongst the laborious poor when he saw them bowed down by penury and disease? No! Did he plan and execute any scheme for the amelioration of the condition of his tenants, who were ruined by the hardness of the times? No! When the orphan and the widow cried out to him, did he relieve them?



No! He was surrounded by a blaze of splendor so bright as to obscure every dark object around him; yet when he returned, the *tenants* flattered him, the *tenants* fawned upon him, the *tenants* invoked him as a deity, and forgot that he was a *frail and mortal man!* But the sages of the Fever-isle exclaimed, when they saw this folly—"Oh for the fish's gall which the angel gave to Tobit, to anoint the visual organs of these tenantry, that they may no longer grope in blindness, but be qualified to know good from evil!"

THE END.









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